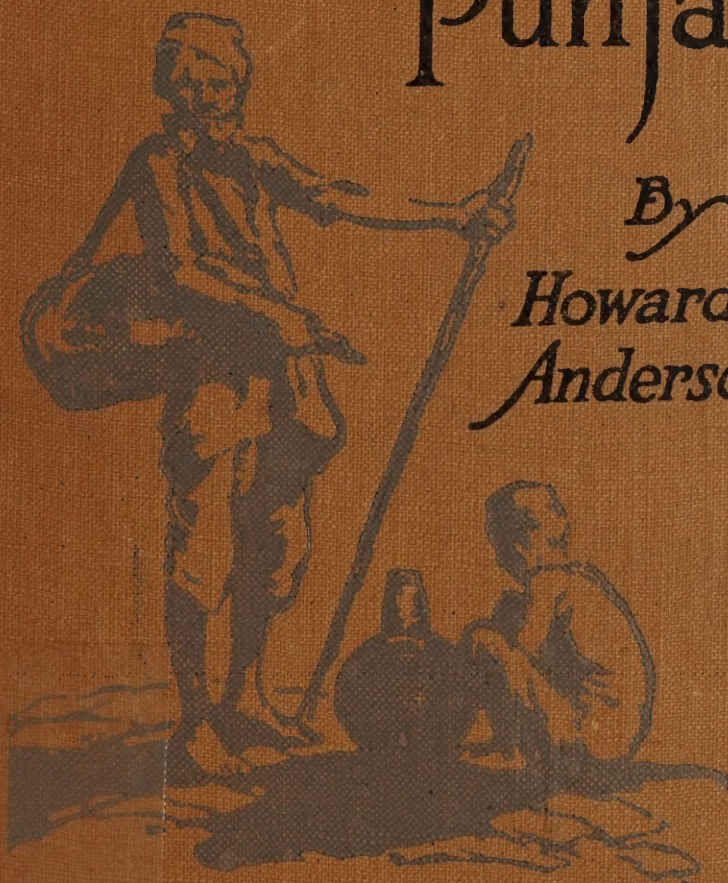


Gospel Romance *in the* Huts of the Punjab

By
Howard E.
Anderson



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Gospel romance in the huts
of the Punjab

**GOSPEL ROMANCE IN THE HUTS
OF THE PUNJAB**



“Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again.”

(The water-carrier called *bihishti* or “heavenly one” quenches ever-recurring thirst in the parched Punjab.)

✓
Gospel Romance in the Huts
of the Punjab

*Glimpses of Missionary Activity in the Villages of
Northwest India*

By
✓
HOWARD E. ANDERSON

*Missionary, The Board of Foreign Missions of
the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A.*

Introduction by
CHARLES R. ERDMAN, D.D., LL.D.



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*TO MY WIFE,
Missionary and Home-Maker
Among the Huts.*



Introduction

THE romance, the power and the appeal of modern missions are impressively portrayed by these miniature sketches of real life in the mud built villages of India.

The author has been itinerating among the primitive peasants of the Punjab. His eyes, opened by the touch of Christian sympathy, have seen, beneath the squalor, the suffering, the ignorance and the sin of these outcastes, immortal souls for whom Christ died.

With a few deft touches of the pen, almost on a single page, each picture is made complete.

In each there is a background of Oriental customs, of ancient superstitions, of poverty, of pathos and of mystery.

In the foreground are moving figures, who, by appearance, by word and by act, are pointing to the deepest extremities of human need, and then to the transformation wrought by the divine Message of Good News.

Some place in each picture is introduced a line, a phrase, a reflection from the Gospel story, so that the miniature illustrates not only life in Bible lands but some incident in the life of our Lord.

Other writers depict successful missionary work

being done in the superb institutions of sophisticated urban centres, or among the various castes of the country; in these sketches men from the most depressed and helpless masses testify for themselves to the saving power of Christ, whom we are made to see standing in their midst, the only Hope of India and of the world.

CHARLES R. ERDMAN.

Princeton, N. J.

Preface

THESE incidents of life in the Punjab are experiences of five and-a-half years spent in that portion of northern India. They are occurrences that the missionary meets with as he goes from village to village. The writer and his family have been living in tents on the edge of those numerous clusters of mud huts that dot the plains of northwest India, within sight of the rugged Himalayas. There are about a thousand such villages in the area around Ludhiana, where live nearly a million farmers, huddled together in space, but far isolated one from the other in social separation. In less than a hundred of these villages are found groups ranging from a single family to a dozen, who have accepted the Saviour. They are shepherded by Indian pastors scattered in their midst. Pastoral work consists of guarding lest the people slip into subtle entanglements with idols, coaxing the unlearned parents to send their children to school, urging them to give part of their grain to the Lord, gathering the people into conventions, choosing and preparing elders, and in many ways helping the infant Church to walk.

The pastels of this little book portray the impact of the "Good Tidings" upon the inhabitants

of this typical area. They recall family gatherings in tiny courtyards, village groups about the arched doorways, chance meetings on the roadway, and planned services in the tent. They reflect souls in bondage to age-old tradition, caught and held in allegiance to systems that embrace rather than release; others with shrewd scheming and adroit tactic seeking to cloud the issue and counteract the witnessing; still others with dullness of perception and apathy of spirit squatting and murmuring listless, but meaningless, assent to the message.

The tales were born and not made. They were written on the spot, under varied circumstances. Generally it was far from a railroad or postoffice; usually where the English language is not heard. They spring forth from happenings so real and circumstances so vivid that verily they write themselves. Lights and shades play upon the pages; success is counter-balanced by seeming failure. But throughout there is revealed a clear strain of uniform need, a distinct indication of a mighty restlessness, and a definite working of Him whose effects only we see, like the wind that bloweth where it listeth.

By far the vast majority of India's millions live in the villages, and with the crudest and simplest of implements they till the soil. They are but slightly touched by the stirrings of politics and the strivings of Mahatma Gandhi. True, according to their highly developed gregarious instinct they

gather in various annual festivals and fairs where the speakers from cities spread their teaching of non-co-operation. And there is no small stir for a while, but when it comes time to go back to the quiet routine of oxen and wooden plow, of straw and chaff and threshing floors and enervating heat, the glamour of it all soon wears off. For these are unlettered folk, and with their limited needs or wants such cares weigh lightly. This is the India that does not come to us through the newspapers; it is the India we never encounter on sight-seeing tours, it is that inaccessible mystical nation still wrapped in the folds of caste and contented therein, still clinging tenaciously to the past and loath to rise therefrom.

Precisely as in the days of our Lord, the chief task of going about among the common folk and bringing them "Good Tidings" remains unabated. There are still the four kinds of soil when the sower goes forth to sow. The fields are full of open wells where weary, dusty travellers pause to rest, and where women come to draw water in earthen vessels. Heed not the one who would decry missions as having lost their romance. There has been no lessening of the thrill of the pioneer.

H. E. A.

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I

FIRST FRUITS

THERE was no road or path leading toward the little Punjab village, and so I was making my way on the ever-faithful bicycle over the hard field, when a shepherd tending his flock called to me long and loud.

"Tonight you lodge at my house," he said. "Dinner is ready and waiting for you. Come, the village is over this way."

Somewhat dazed that he should greet me in this manner, I followed.

"But first you must drink some milk," he urged, "for you look tired."

Shepherds Heed the Good Shepherd

And so he made me sit down under the big tree where the flock of sheep and goats were lazily resting from the afternoon sun, and he gave me fresh milk from one of the goats. And then he quietly led me to the village where, sure enough, food was prepared and waiting for me, and all seemed in readiness for my arrival. Basant Singh, my fellow-servant in the Lord Jesus, had arrived ahead of me and had spread the

news of my arrival. Dinner over, my host quietly said:

“Now we are all here gathered together to hear what you have to tell us.”

A cloth was spread on the ground, the shepherd-father and son sat on one side, the son's wife with her tiny baby on the other. And we brought forth the big coloured picture of Christ the Good Shepherd who giveth His life for His sheep. How wise the Lord was to use an illustration that such lowly ones as these could readily apprehend! “My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.”

“Why, of course,” said Bhagat. “So do mine.” And he sprang to his feet and made a queer, clucking sound, and straightway his flock crowded round him, and he reached down and patted them gently. Then he challenged me to call them, and not one stirred. Then Basant Singh tried, and they remained motionless. Another they will not follow.

So the lesson was clear as crystal to this shepherd-lad and his father. What was to hinder them from obeying the call of the Good Shepherd? Water was brought, turbans laid aside, and there, in the Sabbath stillness of departing day, four wandering sheep were taken into the fold. One could almost hear the sound of rejoicing in the heavenly choir.

A Lock of Hair

Among my prized possessions I have a lock of hair. But it is not that of any flaxen-haired child; it is from a grey old man who asked me to cut it.

Dyala was nearing sixty-five and, true to Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, he had never allowed a razor to come near his head. But his friend Garibu often passed that way, and as they squatted together and gurgled at the water-pipe, there was aroused a restlessness in the old man's being by tales of a certain Jesus of Nazareth who both saved and satisfied. And when the neighbour rose, yawning and stretching, he was always urged to come back and tell more.

One day the travelling preacher came and propounded the question: "What doth hinder thee from being baptized?" Then there were more deliberations and conferring with relatives until at last the day of readiness arrived. The missionary was called, the little upper room, reached by a ladder outside, was set in order, and there in the calm of Indian evening three generations bent their heads to the Christian shears and their necks to the yoke that is easy.

What a time of rejoicing it was! As the long locks fell to the ground, a great burden rolled away. Father, son and grandson had cut off not only their hair but all connection with their fruitless past. During prayer the revered family leader with his son and son's son bowed with hands

clasped and head shorn, and when the intercessor, unacquainted with all the names of those now for the first time to be remembered before the Throne, stumbled and searched, Dyala quietly supplied him the names, loath to let a single one be left out. He had abandoned the vow of the Nazarite for the love of the Nazarene.

Heirs to the Imperishable Kingdom

When it happened I jotted the main points down on the leaf of my pocket notebook. It was a Sabbath evening; I was writing by the light of my bicycle lamp, seated in a canal resthouse near the little Punjab village of Chakar. Istifan, Shamaun and I had just come from Malla. Eighteen days before a fellow-missionary and I were there, and we had baptized Rukn Din, a convert from Mohammedanism. Husn Din had been a Christian before.

That day we found these two living in a grass hut in a carrot patch next to a thorn hedge. They showed us the little hole in the ground where they did their cooking. They had been cast out of their house by their own relatives. They were beaten and pounded and kicked. Husn Din said that the Holy Spirit was keeping them alive. Some days food was scarce; other days it was hard to get water. When asked if they wanted help in getting back their rightful home, they shook their heads and said they preferred to wait patiently until the

Saviour whom they had found would grip the hearts of their relatives that now were so hard and bitter. Others had been persecuted before; gladly would they endure for His sake.

"Tonight, it seems that we two are alone here on the edge of the village, and almost the whole world is against us, but we are not alone, and we are going to win them over by love." The word he used for "win" meant literally "draw, grasp or catch."

Mind you this is happening today, in the same world in which we at home are living. How thankful we were that we had "food" and that a-plenty for their hungry souls. We read together such passages as these: "Blessed are ye. . . . Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward." . . . Two sombre faces began to beam.

"A disciple is not above his teacher. . . . If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household!" These two had been bitterly cursed. "What ye hear in the ear, proclaim upon the house-tops." Up shot Rukn Din's hand, as he told of how he had gone into the bazaar lane telling people to accept Jesus. "And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul:" The Father watches the sparrows; He counts the hairs of our head. Christ will confess before the Father those who confess Him before men.

Then we read the part about no peace between

father and son; a man's foes shall be those of his own household. Literally true it was in Rukn Din's case. They had taken his wife from him and forbidden her to go near him. For eighteen days they have let him live in a sort of dog-kennel in their backyard, with a thorn fence between. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me."

Of such is the Kingdom being made up in the Punjab. During the prayer gawking onlookers stood by; Rukn Din pleaded for mercy on those who had despitefully used him. It was the hour of sundown.

Recently I was granted an audience with the Nawab of Maler Kotla in his yellow-turreted palace. Maler Kotla is one of those states where the government is entirely in the hands of a local ruler, with a loose supervision by a British "resident." The Nawab is a sort of Mohammedan king. I would not trade my interview with Rukn Din, heir to the imperishable kingdom, for a score of talks with the Mussulman chief. I came away on my bicycle glad to be alive, more glad for the privilege of being a missionary, and most glad of all for the honour of knowing two of our Lord's chosen ones, such as these who formerly lived in a mud house and now live in one of grass.

Months went by. We thought perhaps all was going well, when one day in the midst of our short-term training school for evangelistic workers in

Khanna, in trudged Rukn Din, tired from many miles of cross-country walking. The Mussulman religious leader of the village—"Slave of Mohammed" is his name—had grown incensed at the sight of the calm endurance, under persecution, of Rukn Din and Husn Din. Fearing lest this bring good instead of harm to the Christian cause in the Punjab, he decided to tighten the pressure. He issued a decree that Rukn Din and Husn Din should not be allowed to draw water from the community well. In India this means a slow but sure and horrible death. Rukn Din rushed off, cross-fields, to the missionary, while the older man stayed in the grass hut. When thirst almost overcame him he scooped up handfuls from the pools in the fields. His little patch of growing grain began to wither from lack of water.

The matter now had reached the stage where firmness must be shown. These brutish-minded men, thinking force effective, did not understand the voice of love and patience. They took it only as an evidence of weakness and as a signal to exert more pressure. So with a friend I made the seventy-mile trip to Chakar by motorcycle. We rode along the canal bank, passing skittish jackals, beautifully plumed peacocks and clumsy buffaloes. Going by way of Jagraon, where the police headquarters are, we picked up a reluctant official to take with us. We arrived after dark, amid lightning flashes of an approaching storm.

The village chiefs were assembled. A smoky lantern was produced, and the inquiry begun. It was one o'clock when the last thumb impression was made upon the stamped government paper and the last promise to keep the law exacted. At day-break we were about to start away, when the people began to grumble. It soon became evident that they were not going to follow their chiefs who had affixed their thumb impressions the night before. So they, too, had to be brought into line.

About three hundred gathered and growled and stormed and fumed for nearly three hours. The police official calmly kept saying that the right to draw water belonged to these two Christians; no matter how they might try to fight against the Government, in the end they were bound to lose, and the Government had the authority to take the well away from the three hundred and give it to these two, if it desired. At last they all gave in, perforce, caught in the trap they had laid for others. It was terrible to see those snarling, brawny, whiskered brutes stand up and say that God was calling them to such action, and that the water was forever polluted.

Can such as these be won to our Lord? Rukn Din and Husn Din are the answer; they themselves have come from those ranks. But the ice is breaking still farther, and even from that mob three or four quietly came and told us that in their hearts they did not feel as their fellows felt, but

they feared their bulldog-faced leader. We told them to leave him. One miserable individual crouched nearby and regretted that he had been a coward. They told us he was once baptized but afterward had fallen back. He looked a wreck.

When we had had prayer and thanksgiving with the two inhabitants of the grass hut, Husn Din took us indoors and showed us a tiny green bud that had sprung out of the dead rafter of his house. Quietly he said: "Out of death springs forth life." The Lifegiver had given him this sign, and he had recognized it; he would not let his heart be troubled.

II

ENCRUSTED SOIL

I HEARD that our tent had been over-turned before we ever got there.

Dharm Das came running across country and said that a crowd had gathered when the men were putting up the tents and had cursed the English and Christianity, while shouting the praises of the Prophet of Islam.

Friday, the Thirteenth

When we arrived in the Ford, about a hundred sullen, bearded Punjabis stood around and gazed. It was Friday, the thirteenth. Friday is the Mohammedan sacred day. I had to chase away two groups that tried to peep into the tent at the unveiled wife of the foreign blasphemer. My! how Christ knew their reeking hearts when He said that the sin lies in the look! All day long the far-off, monotonous thumping on a drum sounded in our ears.

When it was discovered that they could not stop us from putting up the tents, the order was issued that no one was allowed to listen to the unbelievers. So we decided to go to the house of Deva,

our one humble Christian, who lives in the hated quarters of the low-caste. Wonder of wonders, when we got there, the Mohammedans began to gather. They actually set foot in the courtyard of the despised. We sang of Christ's love and spoke of His power. He raised Lazarus from the dead, and said "I am the resurrection, and the life."

By this time a very large crowd had assembled. They looked at the coloured Sunday school picture of the white-robed corpse emerging from the grave. The order not to listen was completely broken.

However, we felt something in the air. An atmosphere of tense expectancy. Someone in the audience was lying in wait ready to pounce on the first thing that displeased him. Sure enough, when the precious truth of the Cross was spoken, one of them snarled out: "It's a lie," and struggled to his feet. Christ crucified, unto Mohammedans a stumblingblock.

Then followed a long harangue on the virtues of the Koran. Christ was called a worker of miracles, born of a virgin, one of the prophets,—but not the last. At the sound of Mohammed's name, a roar of applause rose from the audience. Sita and Rama were eulogized for the benefit of the Hindus. Guru Nanak received a good word on account of the Sikhs present. They shouted in stormy approval when he told them it was a falsehood we had spoken. Christ did not die for their

sins. They must cling to their empty husks. The Hindus must follow their sacred Vedas; the Sikhs their Grunth Sahib; Mohammedans the blessed Koran. Under no condition were the swine-eating Christians to be believed.

But that night all were thinking of but one thing; the fact that the Gospel of Jesus was preached. Forbidden to listen, they came and listened; forbidden to accept, who knows what their decision will be?

"Now I would have you know, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel. . . . Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; . . . thinking to raise up affliction for me. . . . What then? only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and therein I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

Tramp, Tramp, Tramp!

If you have never heard the Moslem annual ceremony of sorrow over the death of Mohammed's grandson, Hussain, you cannot fully realise the hideousness of it all. Tramp, tramp, tramp came the sound to my ears that memorable evening in northern India, but it was not the sound of soldiers marching, but of open palms beating bare breasts, cheeks and heads.

In perfect unison they kept it up, to the accompaniment of a doleful dirge. Faster and faster

swung the arms, and harder and harder fell the blows. Over near the mosque the whirlpool was at its height, one wild mass of humanity yelling and pounding, but striking no one but themselves, and withal with a weird, constant rhythm and uniformity.

Then suddenly the authoritative arm was raised, and the order was given to cry. Straightway all began to cry to order. Dry eyes gushed forth; solemn faces twisted into appropriate shapes for weeping; the music began again, and systematic tears flowed to the accompaniment of regulated wailing. How farsical, but still how intensely pitiful. From one side behind heavy curtains came the steady moanings of the women. They have something to cry about, I thought, as I looked at the impenetrable cloth wall which held them prisoners. But curiously they were not bewailing their own sad fate.

Finally came the signal to stop, and quite abruptly the sorrow ceased. The ceremony was closed by the clear, cold intonings of a portion of the Koran.

"No One Can Forgive Sins Save God Alone"

"No one can forgive sins save God alone." The Mohammedan who spoke these words with snap-jawed finality and firmness felt he had closed the argument.

He was sitting squarely in front of his village

mosque. In the late afternoon the faint outline of the Himalaya Mountains could be seen off in the direction of Simla. A group of the faithful had paused to enjoy the discussion before entering the sacred enclosure for their sun-down genuflexions. We had been forbidden to sing or play our accordion by one of the town elders, who paced up and down impatiently waving us away. His son had died that day and they were expecting the bier to come along the very road on which we were standing, any moment. 'Twas no time for singing, he said. So we stopped to talk the Good News quietly; but, as usual, were interrupted. "No one can forgive sins save God alone."

It sounded so strikingly like the same thing those "doctors of the law sitting by" had said, "who were come out of every village of Galilee," when they were crowded inside the house blocking the doorway where the determined friends had broken through the roof to present their palsy patient to the Physician. I felt I had been lifted literally back through the ages and was permitted to listen to the same inner "reasonings" that the Lord Himself had heard. How identical the argument! And how true the alternative. Our Lord either forgives and is God, or He blasphemes and is only a man. He does forgive, therefore He is God.

The doctors inside that crowded doorway centuries ago and those in front of this village mosque

today are both right. No one but God forgives sins. To them was given the sign "that ye may know." To these is given the Word that they, too, may know. And to these is given the command as well, "Arise and walk." For these, too, are palsied, woefully so. But do they? Christ said, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." And him they have received, who came in his own name; millions of them have received him and bear his name.

It was dark when we got back to Ludhiana from the village. We were held up at the crossing until the Calcutta Mail dashed by. My dinner was waiting for me, and as I ate, a woman sitting outside pulled the swaying fan back and forth over my head. I watched her and thought of her condition;—sprung from the lowest of the low, living with a man out of wedlock when she became a Christian, sold to another man for a few pieces of silver; ignorant, erring and nearly blind, yet grateful for the feeble light she had, and striving to live up to it.

And as I pondered over her and compared her with the haughty one in the village a few hours before, I could not help but think of Christ's comparison as He faced the self-satisfied elders of the people. "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." And the harlots! That must

mean such as old Punni pulling the fan and sitting on my doorstep, with her checkered past and her struggling present. Yes, it's true, she will enter the kingdom before that village elder of the people.

Seeking the Living Among the Dead

When we got within four miles of Jagraon we met a stream of Punjabi people coming out along the road. The big annual festival was on and these were some who had spent the day in town and were now going home to nearby villages. We must have passed a hundred riding on camels, and more than a thousand on foot.

When we got within a half mile of the bazaar the jam was too much for the car to go any farther. I walked past long rows of candy booths, trinket sellers, wrestlers, moving picture shows, etc., etc. The atmosphere was one of a gay carnival. We preached in front of our tiny tent, sold copies of the Gospels, and sang to the accompaniment of a small hand organ and two drums.

But when night came on, I saw the central attraction of all the gathering. It was the grave of one of Mohammed's followers who died only fifty years ago. We pushed through the surging, jostling, good-natured crowd into a courtyard in the center of which was a white stone tomb.

In front were two women grovelling in the dust and moving their heads and shoulders in a never-

ending circular motion. A man tried to stop one by putting his hand on her head, but she snarled and struck at him in a fierce frenzy. One long shaggy-haired person was rotating his head on his perfectly loose-jointed neck. I stood there for over twenty-five minutes, and he never ceased an instant. Ten seconds of such rapid action would send me whirling into a dizzy fit.

Hundreds and hundreds of onlookers sat hypnotized, awaiting their turn to catch the spirit. I was told that by midnight the affair would be at full swing, with half the crowd carried off into the contagion of this wild fanaticism. The goal was to get the spirit of the departed one to enter their own bodies.

Men, boys and women, having doffed their shoes, were going in a steady stream into the tomb to lay their offerings of silver, gold, spices and sweets on the grave. A huge pile of riches lay there, to be afterwards gathered up by a shrewd-eyed lawyer who was sitting on the verandah of the tomb. He was the care-taker of the place, and therefore the owner of the whole show. Catching sight of me, he laughed openly, thus to assure me that he, too, felt it all an empty farce, and that these creatures were poor deluded fools.

But God in heaven did not laugh, I feel sure. The moon shone down in all her Oriental splendour; but there were flickering oil lamps in front of the worshipping place.

“Why seek ye the living among the dead?” They are to be pitied, not to be derided. One can see Paul standing in such a group and calling out in tenderest tones: “Ye men of Jagraon region, in all things I perceive that ye are very religious. For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, To an Unknown God. What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you.” And the Saviour surely looks down on such a performance with longing compassion, crying out: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden.”

All night long they kept it up, these weary ones seeking the living among the dead. Would that someone could cry out to them, “What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you.” We came away heavy-hearted.

The “Begum” Girl

When I first saw the “Begum” girl with the queer name pronounced way down in your throat, she was getting down from a Ford at our doorstep. She brought her little daughter in, and both ate peacock and ice-cream with seeming relish. She wasn’t wearing her usual ghost-robe with its peep-holes, but had cast it aside, and looked out upon us with sweet, refined eyes. There was nothing of the skittish doe-like fear so common in India, but merely frank sincerity. She bore no marks of

brutal treatment, no sign that her rich judge-creature of a husband had handled her more cruelly than his other wives. There was a sound of swishing when she walked, in her colourful silks and satins.



But beneath her calm exterior what a tale of adventure and excitement was wrapt up in that little body. Her English mother had died, leaving the red-bearded father alone with his Oriental wives. Then she was filled with a strange restlessness. She couldn't rid her mind of the memories

of Mission school days when they had taught of the Living Prophet who loves and frees.

So one day she left her judge-husband; he didn't need her, he had two others. And she fled to the home of her classmate, who had married the Christian minister. Then they brought her and her child to the Summer-time school for the workers in the Vineyard, and there, while those of her brotherhood were fasting until the moon should shine, she had the old longings revived, and was filled with a deep satisfaction.

On the last Sabbath when all sat cross-legged on the grass matting counting their blessings, she calmly rose to her feet and said, "I am going to be a Christian. Please pray for me." Then she sat down.

They interpreted her request to mean right then, and all heads were bent to the floor, while fervent intercession mingled with vibrant thanksgiving went up like sweet incense to the great White Throne.

That night a nervous cousin appeared in the moonlight, for the fast was over. He stood outside her second-story room and called commandingly. She arose and gave him entrance, but his haughty pleading that she leave the swine-eating blasphemers was of no avail. Then he changed tactics and, throwing dignity to the winds, laid his red fez at her feet, a sign of the utmost abjection. 'Tis a new thing in the history of Islam, a man at the feet of

a woman. In queenly demeanour she bade him pick up his tasseled head-gear and be gone, for, instead of the hated pig, she had meat to eat that he knew not of.

She has now gone to one of our cloistered girls' schools. But oh, how careful the lady in charge must be. For without are thwarted men with brown skins and deep-set eyes who will surely steal up to the brick wall some night and hiss at the watchman and try to creep in and spirit her away. For they remember long and hard.

III

THE CALL OF THE OPEN

WHAT with jackals howling far away, with rows of tall grass on either side of the road higher than the speeding Ford;—with ambling camels grunting out their guttural disapproval of being hurriedly yanked to one side;—with creaking ox-carts heaped high with straw that has been tramped out on the threshing-floor;—with startled foot-travellers, staff over one shoulder and shoes carried on the uplifted end,—all in all, a trip by automobile in India is fraught with varied and wondrous experiences.

Off to the Villages

One night we swerved suddenly just in time to miss hitting a dark heap lying squarely in the road. We turned and flashed the electric lights on the object and it moved, struggled to its feet blinking and staggering. A drunken farmer had been thrown from his camel and would likely have lain there until daylight in a cold stupor had we not literally dazzled him into consciousness.

Once a lazy calf, left behind by the other scurrying members of the herd, was caught completely

off guard, and the next thing he knew he was picking himself up from the ground in a dazed uncertainty,—the machine having passed completely over him, but leaving no trace of destruction other than a bit of hair clinging to the bottom of the crank-case.

Sand is, of course, our worst enemy, and you would have laughed heartily to see us the day we were pulled through the desert by a lanky camel hitched to the front axle.

But we spin merrily on our way, turning to the left instead of the right, except in cases when the man coming takes the wrong side, which frequently happens. Usually the best way is to toot vigorously on one or both of our lusty horns, then wait to see which way our partner-of-the-highway intends to turn, and take what he leaves.

When it is a long train of ox-carts, one often has to thread his way in and out between, for some will blithely turn to one side and others the opposite. Rules for the road are intended for him who runs and reads. But for those who do neither, a frantic desire somehow to escape this onrushing, squawking, foreign machine seems to be the only propelling motive.

Westward!

We struck the trail westward one day, and our way led through three Punjab villages. In the first, the only baptized person we met was an old

man who wouldn't raise his eyes to meet ours because they were bloodshot with opium. He glibly recited the ten commandments, and was blissfully unmindful of the fact that he broke a good many of them.

I thought of the suave Hindu back in Tihara who rubbed his hands and wanted to treat us so hospitably, but who sold opium. His son was in America; he would give us a piece of land for the noble religious purposes we represented. He zealously courted our favour. Servant of Satan that he was, it was by his doing and those of his ilk that shaking old wrecks, such as this, crouched in the sand at our feet. We left the poor fellow there in his sodden state, bony knees on a level with his chin.

The next village yielded nothing but a semi-sane hag who muttered from under the cloth covering her face where she lay, that she knew why we came and asked the name of her man. It was to catch him and make him a Christian. But she was too sharp for us, she cackled. She had no use for the fabled farms that were meted out to the low-castes who became members of that new queer caste called Christian. We couldn't fool her with our false promises. Away with us. And so we "awayed."

The third town wasn't any better. The register revealed a list of eight baptized some years back by an ordained co-worker named "Moon of Re-

ligion," who had to be dismissed. Only one of the number remained; the rest had died or moved away. And he, too, was a decrepit old codger who had begun his day with a dose of dope called bhang, more deadly than opium.

His watery eyes wandered about everywhere but straight forward, as he scratched his bony body and tried to remember if he had ever been baptized. He gave it up, and asked us to excuse him, for his memory was failing. It was indeed but the moon of religion, if even that, that had ever shone into the intense darkness of his dull understanding; not the full round Sun of Righteousness. With heavy hearts we rode away and passed a sinister skeleton by the roadside.

Here and there on the outskirts one stumbles across stray ones such as these, whose names still litter up the roll. Truly they must constitute the "uttermost" whom, of course, He is able to save. If that be so, what of that hand-rubbing, foot-scraping Hindu seller of drugs. One wonders if there is another savable region down below the realm of the "uttermost."

Pictures of Magic

It was pitch dark. The headlights of the Ford, piercing the blackness, revealed a half dozen loafers squatting near the arched gateway, as we entered the village of Dhelon. Maghi tuned up his drum and started down the lanes and by-ways

literally "drumming up" a crowd. But they were listlessly indifferent until we lit the glary magic lantern, and flashed the first picture smack onto a mud wall. No need for white sheet or screen.

Then they came forth, tumbling over themselves, blinking in the light and gazing wonder-eyed at their own illuminated wall. They squatted obediently in the dust, and even kept quiet when we tried to explain the pictures. Very soon the roadway was completely blocked, and the single creaking ox-cart that came lumbering up had to wait until the end of the performance.

Rapt in awe at the sheer brilliance of it, they listened intently to the whole glorious narrative from manger-cradle to Cross and empty tomb. One man gasped in sheer surprise at the reference to the water which if one drink he will never thirst again. In similar strain, the Samaritan woman at the well had been struck with the extreme novelty of the notion. You could almost have heard a pin drop, even in the dusty roadway, as they gazed on the Master walking on the wave, while the faltering Peter was sinking. How clearly they understood the scene before Pilate; these who are constantly crowding the courts where false witnesses can be bought for a trifle. How we yearned to make the scene on the cross burn into their minds and hearts.

Vernacular words tumbled over each other and got all tangled up, and we were sick at heart at

the handicap of speech. The scene at the tomb seemed fairly to cry out its own message to these Oriental gropers in graveyards: "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" And last of all was pictured the entreating one: "Behold I stand at the door and knock." Oh, why don't they let Him in? As we folded up and rode away, the village was again wrapt in its mantle of the night.

The Heart of the Jungle

Wazidke is the heart of the jungle. Although but a short distance, as the crow flies, from Lahore on the one side and Delhi on the other, it is as different as night is from day. Miles and miles from the railway, it is reached by a winding, precarious road, through grass as high as your head. Once we passed through a grove of acacia wood like that used for the altar of the Lord. Jackals peer out at you, and later make your nights miserable with their unearthly yells. It's easier to understand Isaiah after hearing them. They told us to watch out for wild boar, but we didn't see any. These must be especially obnoxious to the Mohammedans that live in these regions.

Flying foxes were hanging head downwards on the trees outside the canal resthouse where we stopped, and green parrots chattered from their hidden perches among the thick leaves. We saw a herd of deer run across the lawn so near that a baseball pitcher could have hit one. Venison is no

rarity in India. Once a wolf trotted by close where the baby was lying, and then slunk away. We often feast on wild peacock.

But the greatest freak of all is the nylghau or "blue cow." It is an ungainly thing the size of a Texas steer, but with a sloping back. Those who ought to know say it has a head like a horse, horns like a buffalo, feet like a cow and back like a camel! One galloped clumsily ahead of us as we drove along, then plunged into the canal stream and swam to the far side.

One morning just at daybreak I had stepped outside to enjoy the early cool breezes, when I chanced to look up at the roof of the resthouse, and what should I see but a tiny pair of owls sitting shoulder to shoulder, so close together as to seem a single goblin creature with four round eyes. I walked far to one side, watching them all the time, and those eyes never left me, in exactly the same uncanny manner that the eyes of an oil portrait follow you wherever you turn. Not a stir of a feather, not a movement of a limb, just the steady, silent gaze. To be called an owl in India is to be termed a fool. But in this land of constant chattering, their quiet watchfulness seems rather the mark of wisdom.

A Serenade

One Sunday morning in December our tent, pitched at the outer edge of the village, was

stormily bombarded by a group of persistent school boys. I went out to see what could be the matter, and there stood a dozen or more turbaned, barefoot, wide-awake Punjabi youngsters who exclaimed:

“ We have come to sing you our new song.”

I listened to their high-pitched, irregular singing and recognized one of our Christian psalms. They had bought one of the song books that we sold in the village public meeting the evening before, had labouriously copied it off in their curious curlycue language, set it to a tune of their own, and now lustily pealed it forth.

My, how they did grip our heart-strings, these fourteen-year-olds coming at us pell-mell in their soul-starved eagerness. One recited to me in fullest detail the story of the healing of the blind man at the pool of Siloam. He had seen the picture and heard us tell it the day before, and the appealing narrative of the Light of the World had lodged firmly in his mind and heart.

The Deserted Village

Upon reaching Kudáni we found all the Christians had gone away. It was hot, and the place seemed quite deserted. The rag-flag of the low-castes hung limp above their crude mud worshipping place.

We sat down in the empty house of a Christian; it was open, with a growly dog at the door. Basant

Singh had walked the six miles from Bhiki, Patras rode his pony, and I, my bicycle. We were all three tired and dusty. Three wasps kept up a steady buzzing under one corner of the smoke-covered ceiling. The growly dog yawned deeply and dozed off.

After a bit we learned from a stray lad that five of the youths of the Christian community had died very suddenly since our visit of the year before. This is the second sign of the apparent return of the horrible plague, so quick, so decisive, so thorough in its awful work. Patras said: "Let's go home." Basant Singh yawned and agreed. What could we do? I ventured the opinion that we might go farther into the village among the non-Christians, and preach to them. It would be no use, I was told. The harvest is ripe and all the men are out in the field. "Well, then, let's pray."

So we turned to the old, old Book, ever new, and in the fifth chapter of the Revelation we read about the sealed book and the heart-broken onlooker who found no one worthy to open the book. Then the chapter takes on momentum as the Lamb standing as though it had been slain, appears on the scene, and we are carried on the wings of a glorious chorus of ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands pealing forth the anthem of everlasting joy: "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and

glory, and blessing," and the chapter ends in an oratorio of thundering splendour.

We three in the deserted, smoke-ceilinged hut were humbled and awe-stricken. Is this our Gospel, our Message, our Life, we asked one another? Then to our knees, for power to present it. And as the prayer continued, the place took on a new meaning and we walked out into the deserted village past the heathen rag-flag to conquer in His Name.

One sleepy ash-covered mendicant was all we met at the first door. He informed us that the village was absolutely abandoned; he had begged at the vacant doorsteps and come away empty handed. A single farmer at the second town-gate told us he was the only one around. We sat down, and a couple of listless individuals sauntered toward us.

Basant Singh began to sing, and twenty appeared. We started to preach, and sixty-eight gathered around, listening eagerly and attentively for an hour and a half while we preached ourselves hoarse. They crowded close to see the coloured Christ-pictures. They urged us to come again,—these simple, needy, heart-hungry lost ones, for whom the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world.

A Handful of Dirt

They threw a handful of dirt at me one evening,

and hooted and yelled in derision. My, how I cherish the experience. Centuries ago they jeered my Lord, spat upon Him, and mockingly beat His thorn-crowned head with a reed snatched from His hand. Mine was only a paltry handful of dust, yet, like Paul, it thrilled me to be allowed the privilege of a tiny taste of the "fellowship of His sufferings."

Perhaps you wonder what was my offense. I had taken up my abode with the low-castes,—the offscourings under their sacred feet. And so a group of youths, learned in a smattering of the foreign tongue, who "spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing," came to me by night with a lantern, and their spokesman softly said:

"Sir, we have come to be benefited by your teaching."

And I left the hated sweeper-quarter and followed them to the gateway of the village. There we sat on the raised platform where discussions are wont to be held. And I preached on the New Birth. They listened without any uproar, but at the close began their cross-examination of me. Each question, carefully prepared, was meant to lead to a second, then a third, until finally the foreign preacher would be entangled in their philosophical net, and they could laugh him to scorn.

I refused to carry on their public debate, for that meant only confusion and hubbub. So, find-

ing they could not arouse me, they began yelling at one another about me. And with extreme bitterness they finally let it out: I had committed the unpardonable offense of associating with their menials.

And so I left them, snapping and snarling among themselves, and went back to the lowly ones, who were eager to be baptized then and there.

A year went by, and we were back again. They sensed our arrival, and came stormily into the courtyard where we were sitting, breathing out wild denunciations. One grey-beard waved a short-handled axe, and raved of the baneful influence of cork hats, motor cars and taxation.

In the course of their remarks they proudly said they were free from all sin and obeyed the law of God perfectly, and that I was unworthy to preach to others, when I myself was a sinner. I asked them to show their equality and love for the low-castes, so loudly affirmed, by eating with them then and there. They said they would, but didn't.

Soon their force was spent and they cooled off and sat down; whereupon I told them of the Saviour who loved them so much as to die for them. One of the ranters knew in his heart that it was true, because his wife had recently been cured in the Christian hospital. They listened intently and without interruption when I tried to explain that our message was one of love and

friendliness and salvation, that we had no desire to argue with them as to whether the Creator intended we should never cut our hair or our finger-nails either for that matter, but merely that the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost. But one must first recognize that he is lost.

It was a curious sensation to have three dagger-wearing, long-haired men tell me they knew no sin. For, to make such a declaration is, of course, the blackest sin of all. And twelve months before they had bought portions of Scripture and torn them into bits.

When we left they were so subdued and friendly that they asked me to stop in their house and drink milk. So I went in and accepted their queer hospitality, while a group of frightened women-folk huddled behind their veils in the corner fluffing out cotton.

We crossed the road, and a few hundred yards away came to the village of Jhundán, not far from Patiala, where the Prince of Wales was entertained. We had passed from darkness into light. Suta, the weaver-Christian, welcomed us cordially into his clean, three-roomed brick house, (a contrast to the mud hovels about him) and soberly told us of how he had been beaten, his house broken into, his well torn down, and himself dragged off to court and fined fifty dollars for becoming a Christian.

We asked him if it paid. "Paid?" he exclaimed. They could tear his house down and reduce him to beggarhood, but he would never go back on his Lord. He showed me the money he had all ready to go and pay the fine; it was wrapped in a napkin.

At his earnest request, we baptized his wife and four fine children, the oldest of whom is in school; and the father looked on with his son at the place in their very own Bible, as we read of bearing crosses, losing life to save it, and blessings on them who endure persecution for His sake. He had gone through the same thing, only far worse, Himself. He came not to bring peace but division; a man's foes shall be those of his own household. Suta does not fear those who are able to destroy nothing but the body.

Finding the Way

Near one village a man was tending a herd of goats, some of which were perched on their hind legs under the thorn trees. Grasping the low-hanging branches with front feet, they were nibbling away at the jagged leaves in bland unconcern.

I stopped and asked the way. I was purposely guarded in the wording of my question. If I had asked merely: "Where is the village of Thoa?" he would have blithely replied: "There, just in front of you." For the one you meet by the way in India is so eager to be accommodating and make

you feel good, that he assures you that your destination is very close at hand, and your tiresome journey very nearly ended. Truth and accuracy must not be allowed to interfere with convenience. So I cautiously ventured:

“ Brother, do you see that village yonder? ”

“ What one? That one? ”

“ Yes. Do you see it? ”

“ Yes, I see it.”

“ Tell me. Which is it? ”

“ What? That? ”

“ Yes.”

“ That is Thoa.”

Ah! The information gained; the manipulation unsuspected.

“ The road? Where is it? ”

“ To the village, you mean? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Well, you can go by that tree yonder, then around that well.” He pointed with his chin.

“ Or you can go this way across the field.”

“ But the road, brother? The regular road? ”

“ By your kindness, sir, take your choice.”

Despairing of anything more definite, I struck out, frightening one goat down from his tree-lunch as I mounted my rattly bicycle.

“ Anyway, I now know it is the place,” I pondered, as I proceeded to pick out a way to go.

But lo, upon arrival, I found it was not Thoa at all, but only a sort of “ Little Thoa ” or suburb

of Thoa, and the village proper was still a mile off to the right. Clever indeed is the man who actually extracts dependable information from an Oriental.

The Abode of Jackals

We held a Sabbath service in a sandy spot called "The Abode of Jackals." The Punjab has a number of such dwelling places. We had ridden a number of weary miles on bony nags, and the only thing that relieved the desert landscape was here and there a clump of reeds shaken by the wind. But we went not out in the wilderness to see such as these.

Once a kind of oasis appeared which yielded us radishes a foot in length; these we munched and jogged along. As we drew near the village, a mad dog rushed out, pursued by two men with long clubs. Inside the courtyard, with its huts covered with corn stalks, we met two snarling women waving their arms and lashing with their tongues.

My, what surroundings for a Sunday morning service! A frowzy-headed faqir strolled in, sat down, and began to shake his long iron pincers to the accompaniment of our laboured singing. Soon a lad with a dirty rag around his head produced a pair of clanging cymbals. These, together with our own lame boy's nail-keg drum, made up quite an orchestra. In the front row sat a sinister youth, fresh from the field, with his sickle in his

lap. Next the wall was a group gurgling at regular intervals from the ever-present hookah, or water-chamber pipe. Gobindas led the singing, line upon line, precept upon precept. They picked up each strain after him, and the effect was not unlike a series of wavering echoes.

When the time for prayer came, they obeyed the order to lay aside their turbans, and obediently bent unkempt heads in the sand. And, thanks to the working of the Spirit, when we unrolled the picture of the Lost Sheep, and told of the Shepherd who went out and reached down to save his own lost one, the clatter and banging died down, and even those quarrelling women, now standing on the outer edge, seemed unable to keep back a pleased look of approval, though they tried never so hard.

IV

WANDERING WITNESSES

WHEN I first saw Sobha, he came on his camel to the camp to plead for help in prosecuting the murderer of his son. Fire flashed from his tearful eyes as he related in horrible details how his enemies had crushed in the skull of Rangu with huge clubs. He was clearly bent on vengeance.

Conquered by Christ

Two long years have dragged themselves through since that day, and reams upon reams of testimony have been written in a curlycue language by clerks who sit on chairs with their feet curled under them, in front of red-turbaned magistrates under the reign of the star and crescent. And still no sign of justice. But Sobha pursues his relentless way.

Once we came to his house to perform the double marriage ceremony of two other sons. But before the wedding and before the feast of chicken curry, there was an angry, snarly quarrel to straighten out. And on another occasion Sobha came to our house in connection with a double marriage of

quite a different hue. He was in search of one of his own two wives, who had run away! And so you cannot blame us for getting quite discouraged with this wild, fighting sinner, with the tendencies of his past life clinging so strongly to him. Persistent rumours have it that he comes of a tribe of robbers. One thing is certain, he has a wild, rugged disposition to subdue and to tame. I talked to him very straight about the second wife,—he had no right to her. I was glad to see her show enough spirit to flee his clutches and, instead of helping him to run her down, I would help her to escape. He snapped his jaws and left the room; but he never found the woman.

Next I met him in his own village. He crouched in the sand and listened with glistening eyes to the story of Mary beseeching the “gardener” to show her where he had laid her Lord, and his haggard face was aglow through its wrinkles when he heard how the “gardener,” who was the Risen Master, gently spoke her name, and she recognized her Saviour, the victor over the grave.

After the service we rolled up the resurrection picture and went into Sobha’s house. He had built a new one since the night of the weddings and the straightened-out quarrel, and over the doorway was written in laboured lettering: “Sobha, Christian. Enter, brothers, and take a seat.” We accepted the hospitality and went in, sitting on a

rope bed, while our host took a humbler place at our feet.

He took down his chubby violin and lovingly ran the bow over its thick, husky strings. A bunch of sleigh-bells jingled on the end of the bow. In the corner sat his one rightful wife, contentedly stuffing cotton into a sort of clothes-wringer, to separate out the seeds. Two sleek hunter-dogs that on one occasion had run down a fat rabbit for our meal, were dozing in the side doorway. The music soon took on a regular rhythmic movement, and the sleigh-bells shook with a resolute sudden jerk at the end of each strain.

Then he began to sing,—high-pitched, shrill, with a mighty martial air. Wars and rumours of wars were rehearsed with a fierce wild abandon. And later, tenderness and love mingled with that haughty martial tone, as he sang as if his very throat would split of the triumphant life of release and victory that is found in Christ Jesus the King. The singing stopped with a jerk, cut off abruptly high and shrill, as if he had brought us storming up to the edge of a steep cliff mounted on a charger and then halted, head high, with the reins drawn taut.

What a curious mixture the old man is, I thought, patriarchal head of a family with its intertwined sub-families of twenty-eight souls all baptized, and twenty-seven still living.

The "Holy Man"

I met a "holy man" the other day. The first words that issued from his mouth were vile. "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth."

The occasion was this: When his two vicious dogs, chained to a stump, tried to break loose and devour me, he called down foul vituperations, not upon the dogs themselves, but upon their mothers and sisters. One wonders what the advantage is in cursing absent relatives; perhaps the thought is that the pain caused is greater when innocent loved ones are reviled. Curious study in sympathetic reaction! Made doubly curious when applied to ferocious curs by a man who believes in transmigration of souls.

I had paused by his stile to admire the beautiful marigolds in his garden. Truly his courtyard was a bower of beauty, but the man himself, who had chosen this spot apart from the world to live alone and meditate and learn of the Unknown, had degenerated into a hideous animal. His flowers were clothed in more splendour than Solomon; he wore but filthy rags. In place of a face of peace in his holy pursuit, he presented features ghastly, leering and half-witted.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God? . . . If any man defile the temple, him shall God destroy." And the process of destruction is a slow, leprous eating away at the vitals.

The Christian "Faquir"

Instead of the usual hesitant cough, there was a distinct knocking at the door. I was interested at once, and opened to find a bare-foot youth in a saffron robe, with a Bible under his arm.

His face was boyish and open, one in which there is no guile. He smiled in a frank way, quite oblivious to the fact he was a stranger, but with rather an air of certainty that he would be taken in. Such a manner was quite resistless, and he stayed throughout our Summer School, then in session.

Day by day as he quietly took his place on the floor with the others he completely won the hearts of all by his unassuming, peaceful manner. We learned that his name was "Blessed of the Messiah." He told us how he went from place to place trying to be a Living Epistle, for those among whom he worked could read no other kind of letter. He referred to his yellow mantle as a sign of the "new man" acquired after first putting off the "old man" and all his trappings.

He carried no scrip nor wallet, and was contentedly resigned in all things. He remembered that the body was for the Lord, and the Lord for the body, so there were no traces of clinging filthiness or lurid blood-shot eyes, so common to mistaken wanderers of his class. Clean without as well as within, he seemed to have grasped both sides of that important but neglected truth.

He disappeared as mysteriously as he had arrived, and is probably spreading his gospel of contagious peacefulness in other quarters wheresoever his free spirit leads.

"A Little Child Shall Lead Them"

A year ago when we visited Bhaini we found the little Christian group huddled on the tumbling-off edge of their village. They were sorrowing over the death of a child. This year they were joyously gathered around a heaping brass platter of solidified molasses. A new babe had just been born.

Last year we did not beat the drum, nor sing, nor show the bright pictures. This year we pounded our nail-keg drum until our finger-tips were sore, and sang to split our very throats. Last year we had spoken quietly and prayed comfortingly and walked silently away. This year voices rose in joyous praise to the Great Giver of life, and the Lord's beautiful words about children were read, and taken to heart.

Those who had decided themselves to be greatest in the kingdoms of this world had shoved and pushed these lesser brethren to the jumping-off place of the village. There they crouched and struggled for existence, with their separate well and their untouchable vessels. And the mighty God somewhere behind that grey sky had seemed to side with these merciless ones, as He

snatched the little one from them on that day a year ago.

Well might they ponder over the same question that troubled Christ's disciples. "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Is there caste and cruel exclusion in that realm, too? As in those early days the wise and loving Lord gave His followers an object lesson, so He did today. He set a little child in the midst of them. This time He set him down out of heaven. He placed the little one in their midst to teach them something: these who were groping and bitter twelve months ago. He taketh and He giveth back again; blessed be His Name. And once again with the babe is the answer to their puzzling question that the unkind neighbours had forced to their minds: "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

The Place That is Desert

I walked across a ploughed field with a man who wore a pink turban and carried his red sandals under his arm. He quietly asked me my business, and I easily and naturally told him that I went about telling people of the Lord Jesus.

He listened respectfully as we walked along, crossing over the numerous tiny waterways that cut the Indian fields into huge checker-boards. When we reached the canal bridge, I paused, for

our ways parted at that spot, and asked him to take one of my Gospel booklets home with him and read it. He refused, however, for he had no money with him—not even the one cent which was the price of this Gurmukhi copy of Matthew. I wanted to give it to him, but he was too proud



for that,—a Sikh, member of the clan who never cut their hair.

He crossed the bridge and disappeared. Apparently nothing had resulted, but yet I experienced a joyous sense of fellowship with Stephen, who conversed with the Ethiopian on the roadway in that country which is described (as this road from Dalla to Kaonke might also be described) by the phrase: “the same is desert.”

V

CHAINED TO THE PAST

MANY and varied are the demands made upon the missionary. Truly he must be "all things to all men."

What the Postman Brings

The following few letters throw a little light on the variety of the service required of the missionary and the requests which come to him in the mail.

REVERED, REVEREND SIR:

After greeting you, the petition of your slave is that a missionary lady has decreed that with your honour there is a man, Peter by name, who wishes to make his girl's wedding. So there is by us one Christian Compounder, works in Government Hospital, and to him eight dollars and fifty cents per month salary meets; so with kindness your honour should make this arrangement. Now my peace unto you.

(Signed) AMIR KHAN.

Here's another:

DEAR SIR:

Nothing from you up to date, from the time I had seen your pious soul at village Mallah, and I pray to God that the cause of your not writing to me may be something else than any serious mishap. Kindly refer me about your self soon. I am very anxious to know about it.

Kindly let me know up to what date are you here at Ludhiana, and when are you going to visit our surrounding villages; as I myself and my son, about whom I had perhaps talked with you, who is studying in the civil engineering school at Lucknow, (U.P), are anxious to see you. I have a mind to send him in the Thomson Civil Engineering College, Roorkee after passing the course of his present study. please write me can you help him to some extent to join that college.

Hoping to receive an early and favourable reply, thanking in anticipation,

Yours ob't'ly,

NAURATA RAM.

B. C. to dear madam and the same to you please, love to dear chaps.

The "dear chaps" referred to are aged two years and six months respectively. I haven't the faintest idea what "B. C." means.

* * * * *

The following correspondence is from a young Hindu who in his capacity as teacher of Urdu proved quite acceptable. The degree of his acceptability as a master of the English tongue will speak for itself. When I called on him one day, he hurried in from an adjoining building, and apologetically remarked that he had been "beguiling himself" in the social rooms.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Yours to hand and gives me much pleasure. With respect to my health, I am very well and tolerably cheerful.

I am much thankful that you have not forgotten me. It is very warm in Ferozepore these days. and no rain at all here.

I perform my religious duties daily as usual, and attend religious meetings every sunday in the evening.

As to my conversion into your religion for nothing as you have pointed out in your letter I would like to tell you that there is no more superamacy in the Christianity than other reli-

gion. As to the Scientific Reasons Hindu Religion is by all means considered highest.

Man tries hard to find out ways and methods to obtain salvation these ways can be had from the Hindus Sacred Books very easily therefore the Hindus are found on the top in the Spiritual Improvement.

I regret that my wife could not pen a single word in english to your wife as she is ignorant of that language. She thanks very much your wife as she keeps her name on her lips. My wife would like to pen in her own language if she would approve in reply.

Best complements to Mrs. on behalf of my wife and daughter. Both expect you (pair) here on the expiry of hot weather with great success.

We believe you will be thus writing.

Yours very sincerely,

KASHIR RAM.

MY DEAR SAHIB:

Having no cause of such long silence since you have left Ferozepore for Ludhiana.

Hoping you and madam are getting on well.

How are you going on with your vernacular lessons?

You have not forgotten me. I with my wife are expected at Ludhiana very shortly to see the Lady Doctor, and will seek your help and hope you will at your best help me in every case at Ludhiana.

My children are remembering you at heart.

Yrs,
KASHI RAM,
Shah Ganj Street.

As for the following, whatever else we may say, it does not lack in directness of appeal and greatness of expectancy. Ambition, that restless driver of the soul, cares naught for confusion of motives.

TO THE HEAD PRIEST,
AMERICAN MISSION.

DEAR SIR:

With due respect and humble submission I beg to say that I am educated up to matriculation and I wish to go to another country. I have heard that American Mission of Ludhiana send the men to America or Australia if he embrace their religion. So I wish to go on embracing the Christianity religion if you may send

me to Australia or America at your expense.

Yours faithfull,

DURBAR SINGH,

Ladhai ke Moga,

Bagaparana, Ferozepore.

Christmas Without Christ

It was the evening before Christmas. The narrow market street was packed with followers of Islam gathered together for the great annual "Festival of Light." The moon had proven propitious; the red-bearded elders had given the word, and so the eager villagers had come in thousands to the great City.

To venture into the crowd was vain; when we struck the outer edge the whole mass seemed merely to sway, each unit playing on the next and sending the vibration through the whole, but revealing no possibility of a break. They were not disorderly, but seemed solemnly intent. If we should ask one what it all means, he would reply: "It's the Festival of Light." Beyond that he cannot tell; he is merely faithful to tradition.

How strange that this year it so fell out that this Festival came on the eve of the birthday of Him who is the Light of the World. Bound in the prison-house of darkness, how pitiful to be celebrating a supposed festival of light, with their tiny mud dishes and the bit of wick floating in the oil,

on the very night commemorating the birth of Him who is the "light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of thy people, Israel."

New Year with Nothing New

'Twas New Year's Eve far in the interior of the Punjab. The lantern of magic was balking for some reason, and the crowd in front of the abandoned schoolhouse was getting restless.

There had been a flood of water in the tent and at the same time the tin trunk of books got soaked, the lens somehow got blurred. The rugged farmer folk jostled each other good-naturedly at first; then here and there a fit of anger flared up, and blows were struck in earnest. It was the same village where two years before we had to call the police to keep the black-bearded Mohammedans from cutting off the water supply of the Christians. They remember long and deep; these sullen grudge-bearers.

And so the crowd got bigger and bigger, and noisier and noisier. At last the pictures of the Christ-life had to be shown, dim as they were, and accompanied by a rapid-fire preaching for two solid hours, so as to give no pause for untoward interruption. They slipped away quietly and in order. The hour was late; soon the happy New Year would be ushered in. But in Malla all was still.

A Hindu storekeeper asked if I'd have some

tea, and then took me to his shop with its tins of grain and pots of herbs on the floor, scene of such shrill-voiced bartering in the day time, but now weird and silent enough, with its long shadows caused by the single, sputtering wick.

Then my host was in a quandary. He must be unstinting in his hospitality, but at the same time he must save his brass vessels from the Christian's polluting touch. What could he do? Midnight was approaching; the departure of the Old, the arrival of the New.

And there he stood perplexed, clinging to his "Old;" secretly longing to be released by the "New." The Kingdom of God consisteth not in eating and drinking. The pictures, though dim, had caused a new longing to rise in his heart. But there were the sacred dishes in all their Hindu purity, never yet defiled by touch of those beyond the pale.

He thought of a scheme, quickly despatched a messenger, who ran and roused one in the lowly Christian quarter, and brought Christian dishes. The tea and bread and pulse were served in the borrowed cups and plates, and in perfect politeness he bowed me out into the night. Soon the year of newness came and found Malla and her poor polite Hindu still living in the "Old."

A Knotty Problem

One evening precisely at dusk three Hindus

came to our tent. All doffed their shoes; all bowed in great dignity; none shook hands; one sat on a chair with his feet folded under him, one sat on a grass stool, and one on the ground.

Without any preliminaries the conversation plunged into religion. And, O so different from the Mussulman inquirers who had come once before. These men had no difficulty in acknowledging Christ as divine, as the Son of God, as having risen from the dead. But they had a puzzling problem. Fateh Masih had said, when we preached in the bazaar two days before, that through faith in Christ our sins are forgiven, and Kharm Chand could never believe that.

He explained to me how that all deeds, good or bad, were followed by their fruit; there could be no changing of this law.

"Quite true," I admitted, "but the punishment due me, He took upon Himself."

Kharm Chand couldn't grasp that, or rather wouldn't. He muttered something about injustice, and stoically preferred to bear his own burden of consequences, confidently looking forward to numerous other chances after death.

I held out a coin to him, and asked him to take it as a gift.

When he hesitated and drew back, I showed him that God's free gift of salvation was merely that and nothing more. All we need to do is to receive it at His hands. The theory and the illustration

fascinated him; he probably inwardly added it to his store of religious arguments.

The man sitting on the ground spoke up, putting forward the same argument that was in vogue in Paul's time; if we are forgiven, then what is to prevent our sinning to our heart's content and always being forgiven. No different than what confronted the Apostle, who, in the sixth of Romans, meets the point: "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" And the same answer suffices now as then, so long ago. Once dead to sin, we are become bondservants of the risen Lord.

But still my three friends talked glibly and profusely on and on. They believed all things and yielded their hearts to none. They loved generalities, but shunned personal applications. They abounded in abstractions, but were lean in concrete experiences. Like the Pharisees who refused to believe that the blind man had been made to see, saying, in their philosophical phrases, that it can't be done. But the man who had sat by the wayside and had heard the Lord's voice, and had obeyed by washing in the pool of Siloam knew, because something had occurred to him.

And so something must occur inside of Kharm Chand and his two friends, and must occur farther inside than their agile minds, so alert and so ready to build feasible chain-arguments.

When they politely asked for permission to go,

and stolidly backed out of the tent in true Oriental form and respectfulness, I could not help but recall Paul's admonition to his "beloved child," Timothy: "Shun profane babblings," "Strive not about words, to no profit."

A Fright!

A Hindu woman was struck with terror the afternoon she saw my wife. We tried to soothe and calm her, but the poor old creature was actually trembling when she cautiously sat down beside the strange white woman.

She had lived all her life in the small town of Raikot, never going away except twice to Hardwar to try and wash her sins away in the sacred river. But so secluded had she lived,—so strictly kept behind curtains, that she had never set eyes on an American woman, and didn't know of the existence of such people. The sheer shock of it when she came into the little courtyard where we were sitting was almost too much for her distracted nerves. Mind you, such are the things that are happening today with all of our boasted enlightenment.

Dead Tradition

It was night and rainy. I had scrambled and stumbled down the rocky pathway that led from Kasauli to the little mountain station where the train bursts forth out of a long, dark tunnel, swerves around a sharp curve, and comes to a

jerky stop, screeching and hissing to be on its rough-and-tumble way down the hillside.

But this night all was perfectly still. The track,—so narrow that one felt the tunnel-opening must be the mouth of a mine, and these rails those on which the plodding mules haul forth their carts of coal,—could hardly be seen through the driving rain and the deepening darkness. Drenched to the skin, I peered into the dimly lighted room that served as ticket office, telegraph office, storehouse and waiting room combined, and asked about the train. There had been a derailment somewhere near Simla, and no word had come through as to when a train would arrive.

What could I do? Well, one thing was certain; I should try to get my wet clothes dry. Train or no train, I could not afford to run the chances of pneumonia. So, spying a tiny burner of charcoal coals in an adjoining room, I proceeded to take possession of it. The place had no light in it except the reflection from the fire.

Just as I stooped to pick up the red-glowing vessel, a gruff voice accosted me from the corner on the floor.

I was startled, but managed to mumble forth in jumbled Urdu that I was wet and needed the fire. He replied in perfect English that I should take the coals outside, and not contaminate him while he was eating his dinner.

Sure enough, crouched in the pitch darkness of

that corner, stripped to the waist, with the small round caste-mark on his forehead, and eating with his hands from many brass vessels, sat the station-master, learned in English, telegraphy, and handling of railroad trains, yet sitting in the darkness to eat his caste-regulated meal.

“What a picture!” I thought. Still sitting in darkness. The world rushes past his door every day in its ceaseless progress toward the light, while he prefers to crouch in the corner. Had I touched his dish of pulse and meal, it would have been ruined! “O, Brahman, chained in the prison-house of a dead tradition, know ye not that ‘not that which entereth into the mouth defileth the man; but that which proceedeth out of the mouth, this defileth the man.’” Blind leaders of the blind. “Ye have made void the word of God because of your tradition.”

Intercepted in An Alley

On entering the village of Dalla on my bicycle, I soon found myself in a very narrow, winding lane. A man sitting in a doorway, making potters’ vessels of clay, called out to me, and I stopped.

Soon a curious crowd gathered around, wondering what I could be doing in so narrow a side-lane. They inquired what the roll was, tied to the back of my bicycle, so I showed it to them; a picture of Christ healing the man at the pool of Bethesda. Then they asked me to come to the town meeting

hall and tell them at length about the picture, and we wound back through the lane to the building, situated right in front of the big village well with its several pulley-wheels where the ropes are let down.

By this time a considerable crowd had gathered to see the strange coloured picture of Him who, by the mere word of command, brought healing to a man sick for thirty-eight long years. Then the lesson of how we, too, are sin-sick, lying helpless for years and years, and this same Saviour comes with His power-message of "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk." How eagerly they had crowded around; how keenly they looked and listened. No one can ever make me believe that chance meetings are merely by chance.

A Touch of Court Manners

As I stood in the doorway of the Government Canal Bungalow at Chakar, I saw six men coming across the field from the village. They approached in dignified silence, slipped out of their shoes, without so much as bending over, and then coming inside, each in turn bowed and extended both hands in which lay a silver rupee.

I could have gathered and pocketed the equivalent of two dollars from these half dozen bearded, turbaned men, but it would have been a serious breach of etiquette. My part in this formality was graciously to touch the coins as a sign that I pre-

ferred not to accept their offer, but that I prized the spirit of hospitality and generous friendliness which prompted this greeting, more than the mere money.

How fascinating to find, far out in the farming community, this touch of court manners, so elegant and withal so expressive of something inward and fine. These men are so simple that they have to put their thumb impression on papers that require their signature.

They sat on the floor in a semi-circle. In perfect naturalness the conversation trended toward the Saviour, who had such a spirit toward His followers that He arose one time after a meal and washed their feet. Did they want to see the beautiful coloured picture illustrating this incident? All agreed eagerly, and gazed at it in childlike adoration. The scene, and more than that, the deep meaning of the act, gripped their hearts. These six are elders in an infant church situated in the heart of the Punjab, fourteen miles from a railroad and thirty-six miles from a city.

VI

GROPING IN THE DAY

IT was evening at dusk when I entered the quiet Punjab village where weavers make soft blankets from sheep's wool; and when I alighted from my bicycle, a yellow flag on a tall staff caught my eye. It marked the spot where a revered teacher had lodged in his wanderings many years ago.

I took off my shoes and entered the building. Not a soul was astir. I called, and somewhere from the glazed recesses a barefoot attendant appeared wearing a tall turban encircled by a ring of steel.

The Entombed Book

He washed his hands and feet, muttered a prayer, and entered the inner chamber where lay the Sacred Book enshrouded in a heavy crepe. Removing the covering, he read to me in sepulchral tones a chain of dead platitudes. He sighed and came out, and the bare walls echoed back his every sound.

It was all so cold, so lifeless; this funereal ceremony over a dead book, harping on a remote

past. Thank God, His revealed Word is not like that, I thought. So tomb-like.

"All flesh is as grass, and the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, the flower falleth: but the word of the Lord abideth forever."

"For the Word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword. . . ." It is living. Yes, thank God, it is living.

Stumbling Over "Temptation"

The Christians were sitting huddled in a circle; it was dark, one big Dietz lantern serving us all. With pride they pointed to a little boy of their number who had learned the Lord's Prayer. He coughed, hemmed a little, and then glibly rattled off the meaningless phrases until he got to the word "temptation."

There he stumbled. In Urdu as well as English it is a difficult word. Its difficulty seems to override all languages. And it's a deeper matter than mere pronunciation.

They had all stumbled and fallen right where the school-boy did. It was one thing to have a small lad say off high-sounding phrases; but quite a different thing when it was driven home that the word of stumbling meant for them precisely that opium they sneakily ate each morning.

They would have preferred to have the missionary come and tell them sweet, smooth things about a Gentle One who healed the sick and fed the

poor, but it burned home when he pictured them as cherishing snakes in their bosoms and kissing their fangs. Of what use the water poured on their heads; of what value the name in the Sahib's notebook; of what avail their constant grunting approval of the fine moral platitudes pouring into their ears, and the wagging of heads, and the repeating of "correct," "right," "true," in the steady regularity of an Amen-row, when all the time they were secretly soaking their precious few brains in the deadly drug.

There is nothing new about Mass Movements; they were in vogue in John the Baptist's day. And he said: "Bring forth therefore fruits." Generations of vipers don't produce Christian fruits of the Spirit.

Some said frankly they couldn't quit and wouldn't try, preferring to die in their misery, and considering God as a weakling. Others promised to stop, crowded around, and pleaded for forgiveness, and forgot their uneaten evening meal, following us to the tent, then slinking away in the darkness.

The Ass Speaks

In the darkness before dawn we heard the braying of a donkey, long drawn out, regular and modulated. His tones broke the stillness of the early twilight; he seemed to be protesting against his lot.

And why not? Thousands of Hindus with bob-tailed hair and spotted foreheads, honestly and conscientiously hold to the conviction that a human soul of past ages is bound up in that discontented beast. And so as they speculate and ponder over their chain of existences over many century periods, is it not fitting that a ludicrous echo should come back to them from that pre-daylight realm; product of their own Oriental imaginations?

Chasers of phantoms, it is indeed proper that they should be answered from the phantom realm, and that in a ridiculous voice. Once before in our queer world's history, providence saw fit to endow a dumb ass with clearer vision than man, and caused the animal to speak out in rebuke. One pauses to wonder if history is not repeating herself.

Chains

I know you'll pardon me when I tell you that I wrote this on a piece of wrapping paper, for it was hailing outside, and there was quite a pond of water between me and the little tent with the tin trunk of books and stationery. "Buddy" had his face glued to the string-lattice-work window watching the hailstones pound on the canvas, and his baby brother was cooing contentedly in his snug wicker-basket. In fact we were all warm and dry inside the tent, with our oil heater; and the

big black kettle was singing merrily outside in front, though the charcoal burner beneath it stood in a puddle of water.

Hathur village, a few hundred yards to our left, stands upon a small hill and cannot be hid. But her prominence is more than topographical. The night before our arrival there occurred a cruel murder with a curved reaper-knife. The smiling, courteous police official came and took his prisoner away in chains. Twenty or more witnesses were subpoenaed, and many long brown sheets were covered with curlycue testimony.

So there was a solemn hush over the community that night as they watched the pictures of the One who catcheth men alive. He it is that cometh to their village not to bind ankles and wrists with shackles of iron, but to bind hearts with chains of love. Their fellow townsman is to hang for his sin, but think not that before the Great White Throne they are less guilty than he.

Here is One who from His cross with outstretched arms beckons to them to cast all their sins upon Him, and He hangs on the tree in their stead. There is the kindly Hindu gentleman with his lands and his titles, who held the meeting in his own house, who furnished us with wood and milk, and waved his hand magnanimously refusing our offers to pay; there is the humble curer of skins who made the leather washer for our spirits stove; there are the haughty storekeepers; there

are the cringing sweepers; all must some day be bound with the heart-chains of Him who catcheth men alive.

"Eat Bread Under My Roof"

"If it please you, sir, eat bread under my roof this day."

The speaker was a stately, refined gentleman. His kind face and gentle manner were in striking contrast to the fierce-looking dagger at his belt line. I looked at the card, which in great formality he had sent into my tent, and read: "Hukam Singh, Jagirdar," typewritten in purple ink, and bordered with a line of stars. One of the two sons, who were standing respectfully while their revered father was seated, had been trained in our Mission School in Ludhiana.

The gracious invitation was accepted, and soon a canopied ox-chariot was sent to convey the missionary's wife and baby across the mile of sand to the village. On the way, our host's son opened the conversation with this question:

"What do you believe about the future life?"

We trudged together over the dry, arid field, and talked of things heavenly, while the five-months-son, latest arrival from that glory land, cooed happily to the accompaniment of tinkling bells on his carriage of state. As we neared the village, the topic had somehow spread out into creation and God's omnipresence, so that the

young Sikh revealed decidedly pantheistic tendencies of thought.

But when we were seated within the courtyard, and large round brazen vessels enclosing various tiny dishes of spicy morsels were set before us, then conversation, again begun by this eager seeker, turned at once to the perplexing question facing this and every age:

“Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? ”

Various answers were proposed. The ones receiving most favour were:

“By associating with those of the cleansed way,” and “By striving with all one’s mind and might.”

How tenaciously they clung to these outer husks! By all means, strive; strive with every ounce of our power from early dawn to late at night. To be sure, associate with those of like endeavour, for “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked. . . . He shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water.” But these all follow upon; they do not precede, they can not supplant the inner washing by water and by blood. “Marvel not, anxious friend, that He saith unto you, ye must be born again.”

“How can these things be? ” he burst forth in the intensity of a military race. “Faith cannot save; it does not save. Look at the sluggish

Christians of this very village that you foreigners have converted. They are dirty; and when you turn your backs they lie, they steal, they deceive. One must fight, one must struggle, one must strain."

To be sure, "Faith without works is dead," but works without faith are vain. And would you condemn the Teacher for the faults of His followers? Shall we blame Guru Nanak for the sins of wicked Sikhs? Furthermore, it is Christ, not these erring brethren, who calls you to Himself. He from His blood-stained cross beckons for you to accept His sacrifice for your own sins, not those of anyone else. Then, "thoroughly furnished" with the armour of God, the breastplate, the helmet, and the shield, go forth to strive and win in the conflict. But no true warrior fighteth without weapons.

"Slave of Christ"

Ghulam Masih (his name means "Slave of Christ") told me that when he became a Christian his wife would not cook for him for sixteen days. Their little son asked him why he sat in one corner and ate corn grains, instead of eating the big round meal-cakes with him and mother.

The bitter Mohammedan housewife rebuked the child and said that father had become a low-caste. She used the hateful word "Chuhra," or sweeper.

"Do you like to be a sweeper?" the little fellow asked his daddy.

"Yes, indeed, son. It's fine," was the reply.

When night came on the husband was given an old worn out quilt, and told to roll up in that in his corner.

But again the youngster piped up: "Papa, your quilt is all torn and dirty. Why is that?"

"That's the kind of quilts that sweepers use," was the cheerful reply. Again came the boy's question.

"Do you like being a sweeper?"

"O, yes indeed, son," was the same happy answer.

Patiently he lived through the sixteen days, despised by his proud wife who never spoke to him during that time, and bombarded by questions from his bewildered small son. Today that woman herself is a strong Christian, and the wee lad is happily studying in our Mission school.

The Veteran

We were eating lunch in front of the fireplace when a note was handed me from our next-door neighbour, who has been a missionary here since long before I was born. The note was one introducing Bhola, a Christian from the village of Mangarh, ten miles away.

I finished eating and asked Bhola into the study. He politely stepped out of his shoes

before putting foot on my carpet, put down his staff and the bundle he had swung over his shoulder, and, disregarding the chair that I motioned toward, crouched, balancing himself on his bare feet beside it.

He plunged into his tale of how he had been baptized nearly forty-eight years ago, had learned to sing and read about the Lord Jesus, and now was lonesome for more fellowship in Him. He had walked here from his home and sought out my fellow missionary because they were nearly of an age. What an interesting meeting of East and West it must have been, the two grey-bearded followers of the same Master. The "Doctor Sahib" turned him over to me, and it seemed so incongruous for this veteran, older than my father, to come to me in the attitude of a spiritual child.

"Please come to us and teach us and baptize more of us, and preach to us and sing and pray with us," he said, and it was with a very curious feeling that I promised to come. Can this be one meaning of that Scripture verse: "And a little child shall lead them," I pondered, as I looked at this elder sitting at my feet. An hour before he had bid goodbye to the last veteran missionary of his own time, and now turned in simple faith to one younger than his son.

A Distinguished Fugitive

I had scarcely finished dressing one murky

morning when Milki handed me a calling card. He had received it in the midst of sweeping up the thick coat of dust that had blown into the house during the sand-storm of the night before. Such catastrophes are not unusual in the Punjab. I read: "Col. ——— Singh."

When I asked the Colonel in, he first solemnly scuffed off his sandals at the threshold. He was a huge man, heavily bearded, loftily turbaned, and wearing a long, imposing sword. He carried a portfolio of credentials, many of which he showed me in the course of the conversation.

As he progressed in the telling of his story and grew more and more cryptic in his remarks, I found myself thinking of the stories in the "Arabian Nights." This old man had fled from a nearby State because the local king tried to steal his wife and add her to his collection. I was shown a photograph of the wife, some forty years younger than her husband.

The enraged ruler had then started a systematic looting of the man's property; night raids had been made on villages, police bribed, locks broken and even blood spilled. The king, his enemy, is a Sikh too, fellow member of the same faith.

Why did he come to me and pour all this into the ears of a Christian missionary? "Because Christ loves justice and mercy and truth," he said; thus admitting that Guru Nanak and his own false faith harboured trickery and intrigue and false-

hood. He asked for no special favour, no immediate service. Merely wanted to put himself in my good graces; this fugitive from injustice at the hands of one of his Oriental brethren.

His credentials referred to him as former Minister of Finance, now drawing a huge pension, in return for distinguished service both in peace and war. There was also reference to a long line of ancestry, noble blood, fabulous wealth and high connections. All was passing, he said, with a sigh, and even his own son had turned against him.

The truth of his story is, of course, a debatable question, but the reality of his spirit-poverty was evident. With extreme politeness he finally arose and joined his stately attendant, who had been standing on the verandah throughout the interview.

Virgin Soil

It was Sabbath morning when he appeared, from goodness knows where. By dint of persistent inquiry he had learned where the Mission was, and had walked straight to the house of the head teacher in our Christian school.

Sardar Khan brought him to me, and then he told us what he wanted. During the war he had been taken from his village to Bangalore, the large recruiting centre in the south. There he had become a Christian, and now upon returning home his heart was set on having his family and friends

also hear the Good News and become baptized. No one had ever been to Mansuran, his village, to tell of Jesus. And only about seven miles from here!

We studied the map together, discovered how that by following the main road part of the way, then going along the government canal a short distance, the Ford could make the trip. We would pass over a dozen other unvisited villages enroute.

His clear, steady eyes brightened as we promised to come that very week, and he arose from the place on the floor where he had been sitting, folded his brown army blanket around him, which was used in lieu of a coat, slid his bare feet into the slippers by the doorstep, and walked away. I watched him out of the yard, a living example of how the Holy Spirit is moving among the hearts of these people.

VII

STRANGE MODES AND MANNERS

ONE day when engrossed in statistical figures on a two-feet-long report sheet, while Masih Dass was arranging cots, tables, chairs and mud water-pots in the different rooms to accommodate the missionaries at our Annual Meeting, and two other men were cutting hedge, and another leveling dirt, and three more drawing water with the help of oxen and a leather bag; all in all, with the supervision of these and other details, I was feeling that this is mere cogwork, not real missionary service;—then in walked a tall youth from the villages. His eyes were full of entreaty as he stumbled forth in broken English and Urdu, asking if I could help him get his sister. now very sick in the hospital, back home to the village. My wife and I got out the Ford and drove to the hospital. Just as we came to the door, the woman breathed her last.

The Funeral

Then the rock-ribbed heathen practices began. She was hurriedly dumped from her bed onto the cold ground. Wrapped in a long cloth, no Chris-

tian eye was allowed to look upon her, and no Christian hand to touch her. The day before she had been ministered unto by snowy-white nurses and skillful doctors in the Christian hospital; now she lay by the roadside outside the hospital gate, and the doctor was forbidden to come near.

Doggedly the bearded husband stood guard. Falteringly he asked if I were still willing to take the body in the car; his own people would not have allowed the contaminating thing to touch their carriage. He said she passed away with the name of God on her lips, but we wondered what god. In that last hour the steel hand of Hinduism had reached into the Christian institution, drawn her out, and cast her on the ground. She lay "just outside the door."

Upon arrival in the village a crowd of gaping onlookers gathered around. For ten minutes the husband left his wife lying in front of her own mud home while he, snatching up a handful of cow manure, rushed inside to prepare a place to lay her, by plastering the floor with this filth. They brought us water for the car in a vessel that would have been defiled had we touched it ourselves; they had to pour the water in the radiator.

When we came away they were busy preparing the wood for the pyre. Early the next morning the sacred drops would be sprinkled on her form, the husband himself would cruelly apply the

torch, and then walk round and round chanting; the wailing women would start beating their breasts and moaning in their professional, methodical way, and one span in an endless chain of recurring existences would have ended.

Water-Tight

One morning the meat-man came to our door with his basket of beef and mutton balanced on his head. While I was talking with him, up came the vegetable-peddler carrying his wares in the same way. I asked the vegetable man if I might weigh a piece of meat on his balances, and was met with a storm of protest. He was a Hindu and would not allow the flesh of the cow, which he had never tasted, to touch his scales. The meat-man was a Mohammedan.

The chaukidar (literally "chair-man," but really "gate-keeper") lay sick of a fever. With the best of intentions we went to his house to offer help, but had not set foot upon the sacred precinct of his mud floor before he cried out frantically: "By thy kindness, do not bring thy honour here."

With great effort and groaning he left his rope-bed in the dark corner, and crawled on all fours to peer out at me. Although too sick to sit up; although he had been a servant of the missionaries for sixteen years, working faithfully night and day, always showing a cheerful, willing disposi-

tion; although he respected and looked up to us, and attended the service every Sunday morning in reverent, attentive mood; nevertheless he could never allow us to pollute his dwelling-place and cooking-spot by entering his home. There he squatted on a board, with his pig-tail of hair about six inches long hanging from his otherwise closely shaven head, and told us he was in great pain, but would take no medicine from our hand.

A Cough in the Dark

Instead of knocking we heard a cough just outside the study door, then a rattle at the window. We looked out into the darkness, then called, and in stalked two turbaned, bearded men carrying long, solid staffs. They slipped off their shoes at the doorway by a deft twist of one foot upon the other. They squatted on the floor, disdaining chairs, and, instead of coming to the point, began to talk aimlessly and leisurely about the weather and things in general. No thought of the lateness of the hour, nor of the length of their journey. They, for all the world, gave the impression of having merely dropped in to pass the time of day.

They were Ralla and Bishna from the two villages of Bhanbora and Manvi, about thirty-two miles away, in the Mohammedan state of Maler Kotla. I remembered that day in camp, ten days before our Lord's Birthday, when Ralla trudged

fourteen miles to tell us to come and baptize his friend Bishna and six others in Manvi.

Now Bishna had gotten into trouble; so he went to his friend Ralla in the nearby village, and together they came on the train to the missionary. Slowly the real purpose of their visit trickled out. It appears that a certain man Sundar had been looking with longing eyes upon Ram Dei, the Christian widow in Manvi. Failing to get her consent to marriage, he had gone boldly to the court, trumped up a charge that the woman was already his wife, and was determined to win his fair prize by foul means. So the two men, friends of this helpless widow, bethought themselves that the only thing to do was to go to the missionary for advice and counsel, for he can do all things.

“ Lord, That I May Receive My Sight ”

I was reading in the First Epistle of John. “ God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” The room was filled with the subdued light of early morning except for a single white ray streaming through the window.

Yes, no doubt, He is light, but we here on earth are surely groping, with but here and there a gleam to guide us in the Way, I thought. Surely our seeing is through a glass darkly. As I was musing, a cripple came to the door, hobbling along on his crutches. He was stone blind as well.

"I have come to say good-bye," he said. "I am going back to Ferozepore at eleven."

He stopped and talked a little, telling of his joy in the service of Christ as he sold little pamphlets and portions of Scripture. He "reads" the Word with the aid of his fingers, and is even teaching a blind boy to read, too. It is one case where the blind is leading the blind and neither one is falling into a ditch.

Joyously he left me, as he started back to his home. It seemed never to enter his mind that he was in darkness; the reason being that he wasn't. "Ye are the light of the world." Humbly and meekly clump-clumping along on his crutches, those trusty supports in more ways than one, for they served as antenna-like feelers as well, he was letting his light shine before men, and proving that there is a radiance superior to that of the eye of the body.

An Oriental "Mammy"

None of us could ever understand Ralli, the servant of the children. She lived so spasmodically; she died so curiously. At times she would burst forth upon us with a tirade of jumbled language, incoherent and disconnected. We couldn't make out her words, but her stormy manner told unmistakably that her world was awry. But whom she was abusing and why, one could not discover. Then quite as suddenly she would portray such a

motherly kindness to the little folk that they were drawn to her in love, as she crooned to them in mixed English and Punjabi.

Once she stamped out of the house in a rage never to return, so she said, and we gazed after her utterly at a loss to know what had taken hold of her. And then the next morning she appeared again as usual with her queer respectful salute, made in a country style, with the back of the hand, palm outward.

Queer spirit of incongruity and discontent, she seemed always to be seeking rest and never finding it. Her efficiency was unexcelled. Service in a number of particular households had given her a vast amount of skill in the care of babies in the East. She was scrupulously clean. The old Brahmin habits of ritualistic bathing fortunately clung to her after her conversion. She combined within her peculiar nature the haughty pride of the high caste, not deigning to contaminate herself by indiscriminate eating, and the sweet humility of a consecrated Christian servant, holding no contact or task unworthy that meant the welfare of those she served.

Her non-Christian relatives cast her out; a son came miles to visit but wouldn't eat with her, his own mother. One's foes shall be those of his own household. When she took the plague that later brought on her death, by a curious turn of providence it was while visiting her son, sitting in his

house but not so much as drinking from his cup. It is fitting that the evil disease was contracted in the place where her heart had already been broken.

Cruelly cast off by her loved ones, she turned her face toward the hills, and wearily trudged to meet her foreign baby, who loved her more than her own. He saw her coming from a distance and, squealing, ran to meet her, plump into the outstretched arms of his kneeling mammy. Over and over she murmured love terms, two languages mixed higgledy-piggledy in a rush of eager expression, but perfectly understood by the two-year-old of foreign parentage and native birth. Only a few days more and the plague brought her low. Then, seeming to divine something of her condition, she forbade him near her bed, loving him none the less, though it was love at arm's length.

As she lived, so she died, a mystery. She was all alone in a secluded pest-house, separate from relatives and even habitation. She had never in life seemed near to either, in her weird mental isolation. Relentlessly the disease had borne her down, deserted and alone. But now she lies among the whispering pines, overlooking the scorching plains, in the midst of the graves of the foreigners. By them she had been accepted; among them she had lived. And at her feet lie a half dozen children; perhaps they who alone un-

derstood and thronged her here, understand and throng her over there.

Driftwood

I wonder why the summer season seems always to bring forth the "floating population of the East." The rains especially appear to pour out their crop of these travelling victims of ill fortune. Cast up on the shores of civilization, they squirm and cling to the outskirts of society. Slick battered riff-raff, they appear at my doorway with their smooth-running stories, always needing just enough ready coin to reach the next station, never willing to pause and wait a while.

How well I recall the "polite gentleman" stricken with a bit of hard luck who came to me in Ferozepore with his tale of the abandoned mine, family starving, work waiting with outstretched hands, as it were, at just the next town farther on. Unfortunately for him, I had been transferred to Ludhiana when chance brought him there two years later, and there were identically the same details of the story, same tearful tones, same waiting opportunity, but still just out of reach.

Then there is the young man who knew my friend in Lahore so well, but, sadly for him, I was just packing preparatory to going to Lahore when he came up, and would gladly interview his friend and mine. Pained at my lack of understanding, he disappeared.

The other day brought the one who was but temporarily embarrassed, who had seen better days in Allahabad, knew all the missionaries there very well. But, no, he really couldn't wait until I communicated with those good friends of his and mine in the far away city, for he must be off on the afternoon train for Jullundur. He had been so sorry to be continually coughing in my face, but he just couldn't check this "chronic bronchitis." But it stopped, curiously enough, as soon as he left me empty-handed.

Another has just come and gone. Hat off, hair ruffled, smooth ever-running English. He was all apologies, all unworthiness, but still, "what is one to do?" He knew the missionaries were big-hearted; his first instinct had been to come to me. He seemed to glide into the chair where I motioned him to sit. Then he waxed confidential on the tricks of the trade, as the conversation, so it seemed to him, grew chummy. The E. I. R. was an easier road to ride; up here on the N. W. R. the ticket inspectors were so unimaginative, so unreasonable, in fact, so stubborn. He smiled dryly when I asked him why such as he were always on the go, and hinted that too long a local residence involved too intimate acquaintanceship. I looked at my watch, reminded him that his prolonged stay in my study had brought about that very result, and suggested that he had better follow his dozen brethren, who had been here in

as many days, in their continual process of "moving on."

The Lie

The village school-children were listening to our story of "The Lie," whereupon their teacher spoke up. Warm were his praises of that abstract thing, truth, and earnest were his entreaties that the pupils walk in the way thereof. What the missionary had said about the danger of the lie we tell taking the shape of a gruesome demon that would come and take his abode with us and pursue us and pester us until we would fain be done with him, was indeed true. And so, to further his endorsement and enforce his point, he quoted an incident from the life of his prophet Mohammed.

It seems that once upon a time a rich young man came to the great prophet and asked of him, "What good thing shall I do to gain salvation?" And the revered one replied, "Quit sinning and thou shalt be saved."

But the youth frankly confessed that he could not leave off his evil habits, for they had gotten too fast a hold on him. The prophet admired him for his honesty, and asked what were the sins that thus held him in their grasp. These were stealing, gambling, drinking and profanity.

"Well, then," Mohammed advised, "go on sinning, but always tell the truth, and thou shalt gain salvation."

So the young man went away, and the first time he stole something, and they came to catch him, he confessed and said, "Yes, I stole." Whereupon the police were so surprised that they said, "Since you tell the truth and do not deny the theft, we will forgive you this time, provided you never steal again." So the lad went away and never stole again.

Likewise when caught in each of the other gross sins, he always confessed his guilt, and he always gained forgiveness. So one by one the habits were sloughed and at last, by virtue of his truthfulness, he gained salvation.

Poor, pale-light imitation of the tale of the rich young ruler who came to the Good Teacher. What a curious twisting of the real incident as recorded in the Book of Life; how absurd and weak the answer, leaving the inquirer limp and helpless. Likewise for the children who sat listening to their teacher, the illustration took all the force out of his remarks. They were left without incentive or animation.

For if the young man in the story did not have the moral strength to rid himself of his other evil habits, how could he have the power to cease his habit of lying?

It is easy enough to advise in naïve terms; but a bondservant needs more than good advice, he needs "Good News."

"One thing thou lackest," said Jesus. One

thing thou lackest, O, Mohammedan teacher and all thy schoolboys, and thy tale of truth lacks that one thing. "Come, follow Me." He who alone is the Truth looked upon the youthful inquirer and spoke those mighty words. Throw off the encumbrances of wealth, cast off the hindrances of the dull, wordy Koran with its lack-lustre. Seek not to follow after vague, abstract truth. "I am the Truth; come, follow Me."

VIII

SCENES OF OLD LIFE

THERE is a beautiful old-world ballad sung by Russian peasant girls on the morning of a marriage, and it begins somewhat like this:

“ ’Tis thy wedding morn
Bright the stars above.”

And the air rises in delicate strains of praise of the dawn, full of fragrant joy.

A Wedding After Midnight

But in India a wedding morn means night with no dawn, darkness with no light. Proceedings are all carried on between midnight and sunrise, and the “ceremony” is marked by a feverish haste to be through before daylight, lest perchance the rising sun should discover them still at their darksome deed. As they crouch and scurry and puff nervously at long-stemmed pipes, there is repeated shouting to those few fortunates who have watches to tell again the hour, that the “profane babblings” may not lag till late. One aim is upper-

most; to be finished with the gruesome business before sun-up.

I got up in the starlight when our tent was at village Poawat, near the canal. It was half past two, and the crisp night air was disturbed by the raspings of an unusually bad brass band. The "music" marked the approach of the groom. Truly he was late a-coming; I wondered if the "virgins" had their lamps trimmed and burning. 'Twas an unearthly hour, ushered in by an unearthly noise. My path from the tent led past the creaking sugar-cane presses busy at their twenty-four-hour-a-day task; sputtering torches marked the scene of the "festivities."

It was a home wedding, or rather I should say house wedding, for the idea of home has not entered Hindu life. Narrow, stuffy quarters, jammed to the door with smoking, chattering people. They gave me a place of honour, just next to the centre of ceremonies where the groom, all bedecked and bangled, sat on a small wooden platform awaiting his bride. He had at last arrived; now, however, it was her turn to be leisurely in her approach. And well she might, in view of the undignified, rude and crude treatment that awaited her.

But the hour or more before she came was busily spent in preparations. There were incantations and wavings, ablutions and lavings, drops of water to be sprinkled on the sacred square of

ground, grains of rice and dabs of grease to be scattered as offerings. Then more drops of water to be sipped,—for was there not a thimbleful from the distant, immortal Ganges mixed therein, preserved for this special occasion? His hands must be washed, his feet moistened, his head, bangles and all, sprinkled and blessed.

And all the time the squatting, fat priest mumbled various bits of sacred writings to the praise of Krishna and all the minor gods.

Solid silver anklets, gifts to the bride, (maybe, after the marriage, to be returned to the pawn-broker, from whom they had been borrowed for the occasion!) were brought forth, displayed, and sent back into the mysterious region behind, from which she would emerge. There was exchange of copper coins rolled up in a wad of dough, whimsically suggestive of the much larger fees due to the different masters of ceremonies; more dippings and wavings and droppings, until at last all was in readiness for the arrival of the bride.

Someone stopped gurgling his long-stemmed pipe long enough to bellow out, "Bring her in." Whereupon the women scampered and chattered, and, amid confusion and bustle, a bundle of something about the size and shape of a bushel basket, completely enshrouded in a heavy cloth, was carried in and deposited on the tiny platform adjoining the groom.

Not a sound or move emerged from that piti-

ful, little heap of cloth-covered life. No beauty, no dignity, no love. She was wrapped almost to smothering, and dumped down like so much property. Her trousseau was a shroud, serving only one good purpose, and that mercifully to shut out from her own frightened eyes the hideous, heathen rite of which she was the victim rather than the centre.

Some of the sacred water was hurriedly poked up under her "veil" for her to drink, more sayings were repeated over her head, and soon all was in readiness.

The bald Brahmin repeated in shrill chanting the pedigree of the groom with his bangles over his face like a fly-net. Eighteen unaltered and unalterable sub-castes fixed forever the fact of his family's worthiness. Proudly his family-tree was sung, and the party which had accompanied him in the canopy-covered bullock-cart from his village, forty miles down the canal, all sat and grunted pleased approval. Then her genealogy was meekly proclaimed, and when no one presented objection, they proceeded to the business in hand. It was four-thirty, and no time must be lost.

Fire was brought and fanned into a flame. Grease was added, which sizzled and smelled. A blanket was held up to shut off all sight, ironically symbolizing the shielding of that poor little huddled heap of a bride from vulgar gaze, although

she was already buried nigh unto suffocation. Furthermore those of us who were standing merely looked over the top of this blanket-wall.

A white cloth was tied rope-like to the girl, and the boy held the other end. She was also "crowned" with a sort of Hallowe'en paper mask.

Someone began to beat a tom-tom, another to toot a shell-shaped trumpet, brass platters were used as shields to keep the clothing of the "high contracting parties" from catching fire, and, amid a deafening din, they jostled, shoved and carried the bundle of bride four times around that sputtering, greasy fire, while her future lord walked first behind, then in front, with his cloth "rein" in hand. Thus was the marriage "solemnized."

There are those who are inclined to eulogize Hinduism, referring to its sacred rites and incenses as mysterious and spiritually suggestive. There is, however, but one impression received from one of these night-time affairs. It is the dull pity of it all. No snowy-white finery, no sparkling eyes and tears of joy. Only a heaviness and a shuddering as they shuffle the mute girl-child around a fire and into a life of subjection eternally fixed by numerous grease-appeased gods.

Hoodlums

Our tents are on a mound overlooking a city of ancient civilization. The mound itself is the remains of some forgotten village of centuries

ago, as witness the bits of pottery and building brick that our tent-pegs turn up.

While not exactly shaped like a skull, it is a raised place and it does lie outside the gate of the city. And the city has turrets and towers.

Of a morning, God reveals His wonder in the sunrise, streaking the sky first with tinted rays, then folding and unfolding until soon, very soon, there bursts forth a perfect blaze of glory. And of an evening there are the snow-capped foothills of the Himalayas to our left, upon which the departing grandeur rests for an instant, bringing into bold relief the perfect purity of unreachd peaks, then quickly fades into twilight and night.

But as for the city, one feels a bit like Abraham pleading for Sodom, only it's somewhat of a strain thinking that the fifty, forty-five, forty or thirty, twenty or even ten righteous are here. For when we entered the schoolyard the other day a mob of hoodlum boys, four hundred or more, swarmed around, grinning and hooting. The teachers made no effort to check them. It seems that in this raja-ruled state with its anti-government and anti-Christian agitation, it is considered a step toward self-rule to nurture a spirit of disrespect in the youth of the land! Because the insult is not personal but intended for the Cause we represent, it is quite easy to understand why Jehovah-God had the she-bears come out and eat up the lads who yelled "thou baldhead" after Elisha.

There are, however, many more than ten here; more than fifty, even. The local pastor tells me that the roll of our Christian community in this city of Bassi includes seventy names, and there are a good dozen bright-faced—though sometimes dirty-faced—children in the Christian school, where his wife teaches. And they learn courtesy to all. For the teaching of Jesus is that self-government comes to them who govern themselves.

The Place of the Manger

Christmas is inseparably bound up with the Orient. True, we have conjured up a white-bearded, rosy-cheeked, frosty, smiling grandfather, stamping over snow-covered roofs and cracking a long lash at his prancing reindeer. But he is only a creature of fancy; there was probably not a flake of snow in sight that quiet starlit morn. And, instead of reindeer, there were camels with cushioned feet, approaching so noiselessly through the sand as not to disturb the little sleeper. Gravely the "wise ones" alighted and with all courtly demeanour and respectfulness they bowed low and presented their scented offerings.

The people of India do indeed know manners; they abhor bluster and noise. Imperturbable in spirit, they may come miles and miles just to present themselves, to bow and wish you peace, and

then return the long, dusty way. The room wherein they greet you may be a mud hovel, their garb but rags, but they will never lose their graciousness and ceremonial bearing in paying their respects. So truly, the straw, the stable, the manger took nothing away from the supreme dignity with which those followers of the star must have presented themselves before the Presence. Rather did such surroundings enhance their purpose.

'Twas nearing Christmas when we were in the village of Mahal. At evening time we were all gathered together in Samma's house. Our strong petrol burner quite put to shame the tiny wick flickering and smoking in its mud saucer of oil. We talked of light and of not putting it under a bushel. In the group were "Slave of Christ," "Conquered of Christ," "Victory of Religion," "Praised One," and others, together with their wives and children, and also a large number of Mohammedan neighbours who looked on with doubt and wonderment.

And as we talked together of shining before men, yes, even before these watchful, suspicious neighbours, the family cow contentedly munched her straw from a manger in the corner, faintly suggestive of that other humble room into which the Light came that glad morning. And all the time our camels were outside resting from their labour of bringing our camp equipment from the last stopping-place; they, too, brought to remem-

brance the wise star-gazers of the East, very wise indeed.

A stillness that was a benediction came over us as we brought the simple service to a close. Verily it was as though we were those upon whom the dayspring from on high had shone.

Loading the Camels

Well, well, did you ever hear the noise a camel makes? Some provincial folk think camels don't make any noise, but just stretch their long necks and look lazy. That may be the way circus camels act, but honest-to-goodness camels are different.

You see it's this way. We live part of the time in a tent, and we have chairs and beds that fold up, and tables that roll up in a little bundle. And when we move from one camp to the next we pack all our stuff on the backs of camels. Well, when they are being loaded they have to sit down with their front legs tied, and then the rolls of tents and furniture and trunks and boxes of dishes and many things that you have to have in camp are roped onto their backs, half on each side so as to even up the load. And when the things are being tied on, the camel thinks he is terribly abused, and so he turns his head around and looks and then groans in a most unearthly fashion. It is a sort of dismal grunt. Whereupon Baby Bruce, who is sitting by watching the show,

claps his hands with glee and makes a sound just like their groaning. You have to start it way down in your throat and it sounds very funny indeed. In fact, when the camel makes it you feel right away he isn't really in pain, but is only carrying on that way so as to keep them from loading too heavily.

But when the ropes are all tied and they are ready to start it's a great sight. They don't make any more fuss now. I suppose they know it's no use. They walk away in a long line, the first one with tinkling bells around his neck, and all the others tied each to the tail of the one in front. Thus they slouch their way along, their big cushioned feet falling ever so softly on the sand. And as they go, the baby cries after them and groans very hard in joyous mockery.

Blind Leading the Blind

The blind may not be able to lead the blind, but I know of a case where a blind man leads those who can see. They call him the "worshiper," for he spends the major part of his time in praising and thanking God. It never seems to occur to him to complain or to think of himself as in trouble.

He goes about with his long curved stick tapping in front, grateful to any urchin who may snatch up his staff and lead him thereby, but getting on nicely alone, if no such lad is near.

When he smiles, which is often, his empty sockets do not exactly shine, to be sure, but the rest of his face wrinkles so completely that the very hollow spaces are forced to radiate the joy welling up from within.

And how does he lead his seeing brothers? Why, in most every way. He alone in his village knows how to sing the Christian songs, and he has a sort of mandolin that he fingers crudely enough, but ever so lovingly, and his tunes are strange and maybe weird at times, but ever so genuine. He sings of the King of Kings, of His birth, His life, His love, His death, His resurrection and His return. He leads his seeing fellow-Christians in singing.

And he also leads them in grasp of the Word of life. He can tell you accurately of the wonderful things the Lord has done for him. He knows the written Word as well as the Living Word. And he leads in witnessing. Most any day he may be found off by the big gate where the rope-makers gather and gossip, and as they gibe him about this Saviour of his about whom it is written that he restores sight to the blind, old "worshiper" will answer them stoutly that so He does, and he himself has eyes that they do not have, and visions to behold that they never see. Then they treat him kindly and set him on the right path as he goes tap-tapping away.

And "worshiper" leads in trustfulness, too.

Each morn dawns for him with no surety about today's bread, but he calmly prays for daily bread and gets it. Once his goat ran away and was gone over night. He put the matter before the Lord, and the next morning the little black, bleating thing was back again. Whereupon he dedicated the goat to God and gave it as his offering. So you see he leads in giving, too. And most of all he leads in watching. To him the coming of the day when this corruptible shall put on incorruption and this mortal shall put on immortality is a great and glorious hope. It will mean release for him, an entrance into what is far better. The future for "worshiper" has no fear. Perhaps the blind cannot lead the blind, but they can surely lead the seeing.

Greatheart

He has a very small head but a very large heart. He is so clumsy that once he fell in the canal and once he sprawled flat in the sand, but he himself laughs longest and hardest at his misfortunes. The night he dreamed he was being eaten up by a jackal and he awoke the whole camp by his outcries has furnished great amusement to the other men, but no one enjoys the joke as much as Dharm Das himself.

He will stand in the midst of the bazaar and sing with such fervour that his yellow turban shakes dangerously in the breeze, and the veins

in his narrow throat fairly stand out. His songs are often literal reproductions of parts of the Gospel.

This little man with the big spirit will lift his roll of bedding onto his head and trudge resolutely across country to witness for his Saviour. He sees no dishonour in honest labour. I have known him to take two hours getting ready to start out from the tent on his tiny horse to get our mail from the Post Office, many miles away; preparations that would ordinarily take ten minutes; but, bless his simple heart, there is not a vestige of false pride in his make-up, and that is saying a great deal in caste-ridden India where men of the standing of a religious teacher love to load men with burdens grievous to be borne and themselves touch not the burdens with one of their fingers.

He is not talented, but he is faithful and dependable. His good wife teaches psalms and Bible stories to the village Christian children. They have a small white dog by the name of "Some," for whose sake they will gladly go hungry, that he may have bread. They also keep a scrawny pony. Their entire income is exactly five dollars and thirty-five cents per month to support man, wife, horse and dog. All live merrily and cheerfully, sometimes suffering, sometimes languishing, but forever contentedly, a credit to the great Cause.

Mystery

After six days of meetings with fourteen rugged, bearded villagers, I wonder more and more if I can ever understand these Indian folk.

They will sit by the hour chanting and clapping their hands, and gently swaying their bodies. One of their most favourite tunes is "O, gardener, where have you hidden Him," and the whole story is unfolded in song, of the two Marys in



the early morning who, coming to the tomb and meeting the Risen One, mistake Him for the gardener, and put their plaintive appeal before Him.

Then there are the tales of Daniel's three friends in the fiery furnace; the Angel's announcement to Mary; the sower and the three kinds of ground; the palsied man let down through the roof. All is sung over and over, on and on by these simple souls, not a one of whom can read a word of the Bible. God has planted the

Word in their hearts and they cling to it tenaciously. They cling to it verbally, too; their songs are not about the Scripture, but literal quotations from it. One young man, baptized a month ago, sings songs of his own making, for all the world like David. Another plays the drum; no sticks, just his fingers beating out a tattoo on the goat-skin stretched over the ends of a nail-keg.

But the mystery of the people is nothing compared to the mystery of the working of the Holy Spirit in their midst. Truly His ways are past finding out. For one night old Nikka and old Sunder had their hair cut off, which, like Samson's, had grown since childhood. But it was an insignia of the ancient Sikh religion, and in a group of Christians they were ashamed. So off it came, and Sunder told me it felt like having an evil spirit cast out. You know the man in whom the evil spirit dwelt was in church when Christ came to him.

When Wednesday came they were all restless and wanted to go home, like sheep. By Saturday they wanted to stay on and on. They never get tired of hearing the "Pure Word," as they call it. We all sit on the floor and dip the morsel in simple gruel for meals. At prayer-time they are prostrate. On Sabbath after the Communion Service at twilight the first short-term Village Elders' School came to a close. Only the future can reveal the lasting results.

IX

SIGNS OF NEW BIRTH

CAN you imagine how difficult it is to gather together, for a Christian conference, a hundred or more lowly people who live in a community where there is no railroad, who could not read any written message you might try to send, and who keep no track of the days of the month?

The Christian "Jelsa"

We set the date, counted up how many days intervened, and then sent out messages on camel-back and horse-back to bid them come in after so many twenty-four-hour periods had elapsed. Each nightfall they diminished the number by one. Perhaps they put pebbles into a mud pot and took one out each morning,—I know not.

Anyway on Saturday, the nineteenth, we had our tents up, the whole-wheat flour, pulse, rice and spices bought, the hole in the ground dug in which the cooking was to take place, the programme made out, speakers primed; and then sat down to await their arrival. Would they actually arrive? No one knew. We fidgeted a bit as the

forenoon disappeared and the afternoon began to wear away. At four o'clock a few began to trickle in. By five-thirty a considerable stream was coming; some on tiny mules, one or two on camels, some even on horses, others in lumbering two-wheeled ox-carts, one in a red-curtained chariot-affair drawn by more lively bullocks, four loads in tum-tum carts where the traveller is perched high above the two wheels, a few in the motor-car, but most of them on foot. Groups of children and grown-ups, too, came down the road singing as only a Punjabi can sing, in an endless chant so fascinating that after a bit, arms, shoulders and body are brought into captivating obedience to the rhythm.

Would you know what they were singing about? There was the sower who goes forth to sow, the invitation to the dinner which was refused by those who had bought oxen, married a wife or secured a parcel of land; the conversation with Him who was mistaken for the gardener by the two anxious seekers, on that early Sabbath morning in front of the open empty grave. And so they love to sing over and over again these incidents about country life, of seeds and cattle and land and things with which they are so familiar, for these people cannot read a single word of the Good News, you know. They merely retain it in memory through song. Soon the contagion spread, so that by the following morning the air was so

full of joyous singing that eager spirits forgot sleep and all else save only to beat the hand drum, shake tambourines, pick long two-stringed harps, wave jingly cymbals, and peal forth with tireless voices. It began long before daylight that memorable Sabbath morning.

You will wonder if there was anything of order and carefully directed preaching, and quiet waiting on the Lord, so essential to a successful conference. I confess it was hard to pin down these carefree folk, so oblivious to either the presence or the passage of time, yet we did gather under the big awning at set intervals, and messages were presented on such subjects as sin and idolatry and lethargy and the living Saviour, all in the beautiful musical language of these primitive villagers, a language quite different than that of the larger towns and cities fifteen miles away.

And the night the coloured lantern slides of the Christ-life were shown, with the women sitting on one side of the white sheet-screen and the men and boys on the other, they were quite rapt in awesome attention. Hari Singh, who was baptized only a month before, sang a song of his own composition, after seeing the picture of the crucifixion; and it had even more of tenderness and plaintive earnestness than his other song about the time he accepted the Lord Jesus and cut off his long Sikh hair.

Old blind Bhagat from Pharwali brought a

small goat which he put in the offering. We counted two hundred and three on Sabbath evening as they sat on the grass matting to eat their wheat-cakes and curry. The cakes were fished off the inside wall of a hot cistern-hole where the spanked-out dough had been slapped.

Monday forenoon, after more preaching admonitions and scores of salutations, they picked up their small bundles and disappeared as mysteriously as they had come. By noon the tents were deserted, and numerous dusty roadways leading to various mud-hut villages were filled with happy, carefree delegates from the Annual Raikot Christian Conference, or rather "the Jelsa," as they in their simple brevity prefer to call it.

The Importunate Widow

Before six one morning a widow came to me saying: "Avenge me of my adversary." She had been here once before, about two weeks back. I am beginning to understand how that judge felt who in despair decided to do something "lest she wear me out by her continual coming."

I well remember the day, about a year and a half ago, when she and her husband-to-be came for their wedding, shambling along on his camel. They had followed us along the canal bank far into the interior of the district where we were camping at the village of Chakar. A date was set, and we promised to come and perform the

ceremony, Babu Istifan to officiate, I to be present and help.

The wedding took place in the open air, in front of the mud hut they were to make their home. The camel was being shorn during the proceedings, and the solemn vows were interspersed with deep guttural protests from that disgruntled beast. As I started away, the happy bride partly threw back her veil that had 'till then completely covered her face and, running after me, put a silver rupee into my hand for the Lord's work. Now that her husband is dead, that coin has taken on something of the sacredness of the widow's mite.

And why is she today in the rôle of the importunate widow? Well, you know the fate of such as she in this unhappy land; they have taken away the camel, her brass vessels and cooking utensils, her one or two bits of household belongings, and left her little more than the baby boy astraddle her hip. Christian as she is, she flies thirty-five miles across country to the Christian missionary for justice. One can hardly blame her for "wearing me out by her continual coming."

Sounds Before Dawn

Before daylight the sound of a shouting multitude came to us through the darkness. It was ominous. Like the roar of distant thunder.

The special train of the King's son is scheduled to pass through early tomorrow. But he travels

over an unsteady roadbed, for three separate dates have been rumoured as set for a widespread traffic strike. The air is bristling with expectancy and uncertainty, while rumours and fragments of rumours fly hither and thither about our heads. Our jail is filled with political prisoners, but the wild unrest is unabated.

Once while motoring by night, a man with a waving lamp attempted to stop us, but we shot right by, and caught a glimpse in passing, of a form lying by the roadside, and a half dozen more standing near with long clubs. One morning we went to a village twenty-eight miles away, making the whole trip before sun-up. The way led through a hotbed of sedition where fourteen arrests had just been made. It seemed we had taken to darting about while others slept. And still the crowds roar; sometimes beginning even before dawn.

Enmeshed Spirits

We've been sitting on a hilltop for two weeks studying to shew ourselves approved unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. And it's been a strenuous study, for it has involved such ticklish questions as: is there any difference between a white lie and a black one; or between gross gambling and mere games of chance. Enmeshed spirits have fought resolutely for the compromised view-

point. But unitedly we have forged right ahead, meeting every problem fairly and squarely.

Early in the course one tottering Moham-medan inquirer sprawled flat over the grand old stumbling-block; for when it came his turn to read, the verse that fell to his lot was John 3: 16, and the word " Son " was too much for him. His classmates described the incident in true Oriental quaintness, saying " his turban caught on fire."

So, dropping him by the way, we had to go on, morning after morning gathering in the long, narrow room with its brick lattice-work instead of windows; sitting on grass matting instead of chairs. With swaying shoulders and rhythmic hand-clapping we followed together through the fascinating, swinging strains of many and many a Punjabi song. We could look out and up unto the hills, from whence came not our help but the suggestion of the higher Helper. Below us lay the threshing floor where patient, unmuzzled oxen trod out the grain, and chaff blew away like the wicked. We had our " upper room," too, where earnest discussions about the kingdom took place. Every man was interested, from the big grizzly farmer with his ungainly frame, to the meek, quiet lad with the far-away look. The one venerable white-bearded minister in our midst kept dignity and reverence from being overtopped by the restless seeking energy of one or two younger spirits.

One day the city's highest government official,

an Indian Christian, left his judge's bench where he had been busy prosecuting hot-brained revolutionists, and came to our "upper room," sat on the floor with the rest of us, and talked in a wonderfully helpful way about the Christian's basis for poise when all about him seems to be turning and overturning. Another quiet evening we studied the Life by means of big, white pictures projected by the "lantern of magic" onto the mud wall outside. Mornings at ten an enthusiastic young teacher of teachers drilled us in the principles of catching men alive, illustrating his points on a blackboard in the queer curlycue language of this land. The last night the members of the class on the Pilgrim's Progress enacted before us what they had learned about the trials and triumphs of that rugged Way with its shining goal.

When it was over, there were vast, scorching plains, dotted with hundreds of hard baked villages, awaiting us, over which we must scatter and into which we must go. What a beautiful privilege it is to be a messenger from the mountains whose feet bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace.

The Man Who Watched the Road

A year ago I was stopped on the canal roadway by a refined villager, who urged me to come to his place because the people there were not good. But I was rushed with scores of other

communities suffering from that same malady, and besides his village was just over the border in a fellow missionary's territory.

But this year he and I were together as we passed that way, and again there came the Macedonian call. The villager seemed almost to have been waiting those twelve months; watching the road.

We crossed the bridge and entered his town, passing a worshiping-place of the Sikhs, partly built but never completed. Our host explained that the wearers of the black turban had started to build, but those of the white turban had stopped them. So the place remained there, an unfinished skeleton; monument to the insufficiency of the Sikh faith. Farther on was an old dirt fortress, reminding us of the days of this man's grandparents, when each family provided for its own defense.

The people were gathered on the slope next to our distinguished friend's palace. All were quietly expectant. Their chief citizen had sent a messenger through the narrow winding ways, calling them to this slope to hear about the Way.

Obediently they had assembled and silently squatted in the twilight. We could just discern a sea of faces; from where we stood they were about on a level with our feet. Behind them in dim outline were the mud roofs even with our eyes; and above, there shone a single brilliant star.

We preached Christ crucified and raised from

the dead. There was no time for anything else; it was such a desperate business, and time was passing. They nodded serious assent when their sins were mentioned; they even laughed at the reference to idols of stone, helpless and ridiculous; they remained strangely quiet when the Way of Release was presented.

After the prayer, some bought portions of Scripture; one wished to argue: we turned to our gracious host. With extreme courtesy he led us away, and thanked us. He said no man had ever been to his village with that Message. He invited us back to dine with him, and when we came the conversation instantly turned toward Jesus. He had eagerness in his pleasant eyes as he took the New Testament we gave him. He said he wanted to believe and would certainly read it all.

Erased

Megh Nath is dead. But the expression they used in reporting it to me was "he has become erased." Nothing could be farther from the truth, for his life and memory are quite indelible.

Two scenes remain with me in connection with this faithful witness who served his Master in return for a monthly income equal to a day's wage at home. They mark the beginning and the end of our acquaintance. The former was soon after I had arrived in the country. He left his little "upper room" near the sellers of pulse and

herbs, and walked by my horse's head as I rode across-field to Ahmadgarh. It was the season of the birth of the Christ-child, and as we journeyed together he talked continually about stars and a manger and sweet-smelling spices, and as he talked his wrinkled face fairly beamed. Verses of the Account fell from his mouth with the ease befitting one whose entire library is a single Sacred Book. The very clods under his feet took on new meaning, and I rejoiced in my new brother of the East who loved his Lord indeed.

The other hour I shall never forget with Megh Nath was when they had brought him to the hospital at Ludhiana, and that beaming face was now swollen and disfigured. Some disease germ had done its work within, and he couldn't see, he couldn't eat. It was my duty to count out into his hand the twelve small pieces of silver representing his pay for the preceding month, and without a moment's hesitation he handed back one of the coins to serve as his contribution to the Work. He couldn't speak, for it was near the end, but his act spoke louder than words. Somehow or other I couldn't speak either just then, so I pressed the hand with the eleven remaining rupees in it, and walked away never to see him again.

No, such as he are not erased. They are epistles, written in hearts, known and read of all men. Saturated with his single Book, he had spent his years trudging across fields to those who could

not read. Ah, but they could read "epistles," and so there is a corner of the Punjab dotted with tiny villages, where many a small out-of-the-way group of illiterate believers remembers how they used to read this their "epistle," the little old man with the beaming face.

Rhythm

After this morning you can't make me believe that God ever meant we should use only our mouths in singing.

I have seen a great truth incarnated in a group of worshippers; had they been forced to be quiet, the stones would have cried out. Lips were but the place of outlet, not the source or beginning.

Nor could the expression of that which had taken possession within be forcibly confined to voice alone; flashing eyes moistened by joy, swaying shoulders unconscious that they moved, tapping fingers, beating palms, all took their natural rhythmic share in the song.

Two of the group were standing, and with high ringing sounds led on, line upon line, precept upon precept. There was something that had happened for them and to them, and tell it they must. Woe is me if I sing not His praises. And so they pealed it forth about Him who came to take us across. And the rest, sitting on the grass matting, would catch the strain the instant it left the leaders, and carry it lovingly on and on in

rhythmic joy. All the time the undertone of drum thump-thumping, and the faint, plaintive baby-organ strains, served as a distant echo of an accompaniment. Again the pause in expectant waiting for the signal, then another heralding about the one who came to break our chains, and once more they fairly leaped at the chorus.

I now know why they stop singing when sorrow comes, when they are broken in spirit. It was a song of ascents. Thus the psalmist must have burst forth. "When Jehovah brought back those that returned to Zion, we were like unto them that dream."

The dull mud surroundings, the droning insects in the torrid heat, the squalid tumbling babies, the hunger, the dirt, the want, all fade away into hazy uncertainty and we see in a vision afar the things which are eternal. And seeing, we are possessed of it soul and body, rhythm taking up its abode not merely in our throats, in all our members, and that which dwells within bursts forth. It sweeps all the mere temporal things, the things which are seen, out of its way and marches on triumphant.

A small son of a preacher used to refer to his father's pulpit work as singing. Be that as it may, I venture the assurance that such choir-work as we had in India this morning is real preaching.

Romance in Mud Huts

Heed not the one who would decry missions as having lost their romance. There has been no lessening of the thrill of the pioneer.

Precisely as in the days of our Lord, the chief task of going about among the common folk and bringing them "Good Tidings" remains unabated. One marvels at the similarity of surroundings. Passing herds of sheep and goats together (as yet unseparated), and the shepherds with their staffs, we come to open wells where weary, dusty travelers pause to rest and refresh themselves, and women carry water in earthen vessels.

There are hundreds of wide-mouthed wells of water that might be named "Contention" and "Enmity," like those so named by Isaac when his herdsmen strove with the herdsmen of Gerar. For the herdsmen of Hindustan still strive over wells of water.

Women wear a cloth-covering over their heads that is most becoming, and may be drawn over the face, should occasion arise. Likewise did Rebekah as she alighted from her camel, and likewise did the women of Corinth. Servants make the marriage arrangements, only in the Punjab it is usually the family barber, not the trusted household man of Abraham's day. On the night of the ceremony they always wait long hours for the bridegroom; also he "decketh himself with a garland," while his bride "adorneth herself with her jewels."

These consist of headtires, nose-rings, bracelets and anklets, as in the anxious days of Isaiah and Ezekiel. When a man dies, his brother is expected to marry the bereaved wife; and I have had at least one visit from an importunate widow.

In tracing relationships, the mother is not considered; it is "Santa, son of Chanan," and children are often given names with religious significance. Babies are carried astraddle the hip; "borne upon the side" is the way it is put in the sixty-sixth chapter of Isaiah.

Social customs also reveal a striking resemblance. There is the low, deferential bow when entering your presence, the quiet greeting of "Peace," the patient inquiry after each and every member of your family, the omission of proper names when referring to oneself. David called himself "thy servant" when talking with Saul. Most common is the interrogatory method of making a positive statement, akin to the practice of answering a question with a question. Samuel said unto all Israel, "Whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded?" and the questions resound, O, so familiar in the ears of all who have lived in the East. For the meaning is not so much a challenging, defiant attitude, but rather a delicate, evasive manner of stating the opposite truth. Epistles of commendation are in widespread usage, in spite of Paul's testimony to their inferiority to the kind

that are known and read of all men. Permission is always asked before leaving your presence; not until one is bid be gone may he presume to go. Thus did the servant politely request of Laban and Bethuel that they send him away to his master.

Most any morning can be heard the dull, steady drone of the stones where two women are grinding at the mill, and you are startled at the thought of one of those heavy wheels being hung about the neck of any who should place a stumblingblock in the path of these "little ones." The villages have their huge doorways, where the jury of five sits for judgment. They weigh out pieces of silver in the balances; on all sides are threshing floors where the oxen unmuzzled tread out the grain, and the chaff is blown away like the wicked. At funerals they wrap the body in a pure white cloth for burial. One dips the morsel when eating, water is carried in skins, things are kept wrapped in a napkin. Potters make their pots of clay, and the clay is indeed pliable in their hands as the wheel whirls before them. The sower still goes forth to sow, and he encounters the four kinds of soil.

There are many other things that might be enumerated which illuminate the Gospel narrative, and make vivid the customs and life of early Christian times. And in a field where pastoral work consists of guarding lest the people slip into subtle entanglements with idols, coaxing the un-

learned parents to send their children to school, urging them to give part of their grain to the Lord, gathering the people into conventions, choosing and preparing elders, and in many ways helping the infant church to walk; in a field enclosing about a thousand clusters of mud-huts where live nearly a million farmers and their vassals huddled together in space, but far isolated one from the other in social separation; a field where in less than a hundred villages are found groups ranging from a single family to a dozen, who have accepted the Saviour, and where there are always crowds to gather about the village gateways and in individual homes and squat and listen and urge you to come back; in such a field there is still pioneer work and a-plenty, there is still ample room for romance.

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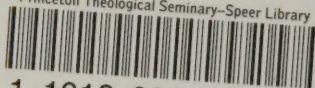
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